THE MAN FROM THE WILDS

By HAROLD BINDLOSS

Author of
"Lister's Great Adventure"

A. L. BURT COMPANY
Publishers New York

Published by arrangement with Frederick A. Stokes Company
Printed in U. S. A.

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Fifth Printing, April 6, 1923

Printed in the United States of America

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PART I

JOHN TAKES CONTROL

THE MAN FROM THE WILDS

I

BOB WREAY TALKS

DINNER was over at the Liverpool hotel and for the most part the guests had gone to the theaters. John Wreay occupied a corner of the smoking-room and looked thoughtfully about. As a rule, John's look was thoughtful and he liked to study his surroundings. He had got the habit in the wilds, where accurate observation is sometimes important.

After the hotels he had known in the Western States and Canada, he thought the spacious smoking-room strangely quiet. The waiters went about silently, and one did not hear electric lifts and the rattle of ventilator fans. John noted the row of pillars that broke the floor space and gave one a sense of privacy; he approved the soft light from the lamps under the cornice. At Western hotels the lights are not softened and the noise is marked; and when in the evenings the citizens crowded the echoing rotundas, John often went off and followed the railroad track out of the town. The quiet prairies had for him a stronger charm than the haunts of hustling business men.

He studied the coffee service on the table in front and smiled. The jugs were silver, but they did not

give one much coffee, although he had ordered some for two. In the woods, one brewed a kettleful and drank it from a blackened can. Then he turned and gave his companion a glance that searched his face and was gone. Bob Wreay had not met John until the Montreal liner arrived in the afternoon, but he thought he knew the swift, keen glance. The head of his house, who died four years since, had looked at one like that.

On the whole, John approved Bob, although the young Englishman's type was new. Bob's eyes twinkled and his voice was quiet. He was urbane, rather frankly curious, and sometimes his manner was marked by a touch of respect. At the beginning Bob had thought to play the part of tactful guide, but it was soon obvious that John was not the unsophisticated bushman he had thought.

For one thing, the fellow was a Wreay. His face was thin and brown, and, when he was quiet, rather inscrutable. One noted lines on his forehead and a deep mark up the middle. His figure was athletic and Bob liked the way he moved; John had a boxer's light step and balance. Bob knew something about human muscles, but he did not know the suppleness one gets by swinging the long axe. In the meantime his duty was to find out as much as possible about his relation.

"Elliot would have come to meet you but his knee bothered him," he said. "Perhaps you know he got a nasty fall following the hounds on Buzzard Crag some years back? At Allerdale we hunt on foot."

"I didn't know," John replied. "I know very little about my English relations. However, I understand Hugh Elliot's my co-trustee."

Bob nodded. "Since Alice, who inherits, is his grand-daughter, Hugh was the proper man. I expect he's keen to meet you and will be glad to know you have, at length, arrived. But he's not your relation. This is important."

"Then, I think you ought to put me wise."

"I'll try to do so. Why didn't you come over four years since, when your uncle died?"

"I was up North, far North. When I got back and found the lawyer's letter I bought my ticket for the first boat."

"But were not your letters sent on?"

"The Canada post doesn't go in the Barrens, and when we pulled out for the Russian *tundra* we didn't state our port of call," John replied.

Bob looked at him hard, but he saw John did not joke.

"The *tundra* is the boggy waste round the Polar Sea, I think? What were you doing?——"

"We went to look for mammoth tusks. Loaded up a halibut sloop; a small boat with a gasoline engine that soon played out."

"Mammoth tusks? The thing looks impossible. Does the bog keep ivory fresh for two or three thousand years?"

"When the free sealing was stopped, some schooners fitted out to search the Siberian rivers. The men who went didn't take chances like that for nothing," John replied in a quiet voice.

"But did you find ivory?"

"We got some silver-fox skins and walrus teeth, and lost the sloop."

Bob lighted a cigarette and pondered. He was

young and tales of strange adventure moved him. He had not thought John romantic, but the fellow had known adventures stranger than Bob had dreamed about. Yet John was not boasting; the Wreays did not boast. He looked across the big room as if he did not see the watchful waiter and rows of pillars. His glance was fixed; Bob wondered what he did see.

"I expect you ran some risks," he said. "How did you get back?"

"For a time we did not get back. We wintered in a snow igloo and for a summer wandered along the coast with the Karalicks. Then we pushed out for Alaska by sledge and skin canoe. Some of us made it, but not all—— However, the coffee's run out. Shall I order a hard drink?"

Bob imagined John did not mean to talk about his journey. He refused the drink, and by and by John remarked with a smile: "You haven't got me located yet?"

"That is so," Bob admitted. "I, myself, might control my curiosity, but you're rather important and folks at Allerdale——"

"They want to know? Very well. I was born at a sawmill in the Manitoba bush and went to a settlement school; then to Toronto."

"A school at Toronto?"

"University. We play games, like you, and sometimes beat McGill; that's the Montreal opposition crowd. So far, so good, I guess?"

Bob laughed. It looked as if John knew more about his English relations than Bob had thought.

"Oh, well," he said, "in England we rather stick to the public school and university tradition, and on

the whole I think the tradition good. But does Toronto give you degrees?"

"I got some little flags. They stand for something like your caps and blazers. Anyhow, for the most part, I made my studies in the woods; driving logs, prospecting for timber rights and minerals, and sawing shiplap boards. When my father died I sold the mill, staked my money on mineral claims, lost and won, and rambled about the North. I think that's all and now you have got to put me wise."

"Your father, no doubt, talked about Allerdale?"

"Sometimes; I wasn't interested. You see, I was born in the Dominion and your emigrants' children are not English. They're frankly Canadian. You want to get that."

"I'll try to remember," Bob replied. "Anyhow, you met your uncle, John Wreay, who invented the Wreay water-tube boiler."

"He stopped with us three months; a hard, keen man, but I thought him a sport. He shipped us a water-tube boiler for the mill. All the same, I don't get his object for making me trustee."

Bob hesitated. He was young and had cultivated his type's conventional reserve. The story was old, rather involved, and others could tell it better. Bob, however, doubted if they would tell, and John was the head of the house and ought to know.

"Very well," he said. "Until your uncle built the boiler works, the Wreays were *statesmen,* small farmers who owned the soil they cultivated. For the most part, the statesmen are gone; squeezed out by economic developments. Perhaps the Wreays were harder stuff than their neighbors, because they re-

mained. Well, when the elder brother got the farm, your father went to Canada and John to an ironworks. John invented the Wreay boiler, got rich, and married Alice Elliot. Now we come to the Elliots."

Bob frowned and lighted a fresh cigarette. For John to understand would help, but to enlighten a Canadian about family jealousies that sprang from English social conventions and prejudices was hard.

"I imagine John Wreay loved Alice before he left the farm; perhaps he went because he loved her. You see, her people were not our sort. The Wreays were sternly frugal, industrious, and rather primitive; they herded their flocks and drove the plough. The Elliots owned much of Allerdale; they shot and hunted. You must remember it was long since and the sporting landlord had nothing to do with the working farmer. John was a plain dalesman and got his education at a village school. For all that, I imagine Alice loved him, but her mother was firm, and some time afterwards she married a relation of a sort. Her husband died, and when John came back to Ruthwaite he was rich and the Elliots were getting poor. They had long been extravagant and rents were going down. Well, when John claimed Alice, her mother was dead and Hugh Elliot agreed. Her daughter, Alice, for whom you are trustee, was about twelve years old."

For a few minutes John pondered. He was not a sentimentalist, but the tale had a touch of old-fashioned romance that somehow moved him. Besides, he had known Water-tube John. The grim old fellow was very staunch; he had waited long for the woman he loved.

"But I don't altogether get you yet," he said. "Hugh Elliot is properly Alice's trustee; but why did not my uncle choose the other from his wife's relations?"

Bob smiled, a rather apologetic smile. "You knew him! Except perhaps for old Hugh, I think he hated the lot. The dalesfolk are stubborn, and it's possible you have inherited the Wreay pride. After all, we were yeomen and held Ruthwaite against the Scots before the Elliots arrived. Well I fancy John engaged in a kind of class war against his wife's relations. He had laboured and used economy; they were careless and extravagant. Perhaps you can picture his refusing to let his old antagonists squander his fortune?"

John could picture it; he thought Water-tube Wreay was not the man to forget.

"But his wife——?" he said.

"She died soon, and John was harder afterwards. Perhaps it's strange, but he loved his step-daughter, and she inherits the most part of his estate. You get the old house, and I a sum that ought to launch me on a doctor's career. Perhaps you now understand why John wanted you for Alice's trustee?"

"I think I get it. What's Alice Elliot like?"

"To begin with, she has inherited the Elliots' haughtiness and extravagance. Then John indulged her and, in some respects, I think she used him for a model. What John wanted he took and one did not dispute with him. For all that, her charm is strong; you feel she's altogether staunch and straight."

"Thanks," said John, rather dryly. "It looks as if

I'd undertaken an awkward job! I suppose Alice is now at Ruthwaite with her grandfather?"

"She was at Ruthwaite, but a week since she went off to stop with friends in town. My notion is, she does not mean to stay there long. Alice has other friends, of whom her relations do not at all approve."

"Oh, well! Where do they keep the railroad folders?"

Bob signed a waiter. "Bring a time-table. But aren't you going back with me, John?"

"Not yet. In the morning I pull out for London to see the people who dress furs. I undertook to get the best price for some fine skins."

"For one of your fellow adventurers?"

"For a widow," John replied, and although his glance rested on the other, Bob imagined he did not see him. Now Bob thought about it, Water-tube Wreay had sometimes looked like that.

"I expect you'll get the proper price," he remarked.

John's pre-occupied look vanished and he smiled. "You imply——"

"You're old John's nephew and pretty true to type. To get what they want is the Wreays' habit; they're a stubborn lot. There's another thing: at Allerdale they'll call you *Ree-ah*. But let's look up the London trains."

II

THE VIOLIN PLAYER

JOHN went to London and interviewed two or three brokers who transacted business at the fur-auctions. He had undertaken to sell some valuable skins and his habit was to do all he undertook. Moreover, it was typical that he got a just price. His father, beginning with a thousand dollars, had built up a prosperous lumber trade, and it was not for nothing that John was the nephew of Water-tube Wreay.

From London he went to Sheffield, where he had an errand, and arriving one evening at a town in the North, found the train he meant to get had gone. He stopped at the station hotel and after dinner loafed rather drearily in the smoking-room. Two or three commercial travelers talked about business, and a group at a neighboring table engaged in noisy political argument. Their voices echoed about the bleak and dingy room, and by and by one turned to John.

"P'raps you'll support me. You're an American; I saw the steamship labels on your bag."

"The C. P. R.'s a Canadian company and their boats sail from Montreal," said John.

"Well, if you're Canadian, you'll know what Canada wants. I expect you heard my argument?"

"I expect they heard you in the street!" a young man remarked.

His argumentative companion let it go and fixed his glance on John. "As I told these fellows, Canada's British and her interests are ours. You can't deny——"

"Canada's certainly British, but she does not belong to England," John interrupted.

"Anyhow, a lot of good Canadians agree with me. Look at your election! How'd it go in your neighborhood?"

"I wasn't there, but I understand your point of view was pretty strongly backed. The opposition bosses reckoned it accounted for something like a resurrection."

"D'you mean an *insurrection?*"

John's eyes twinkled. When he smiled the corner of his mouth went up and the crooked line was curiously humorous.

"I do not," he said. "I don't know about England, but in Canada dead men sometimes vote."

One or two laughed and the young man got up. His face was red and he leaned, rather unsteadily, against the table.

"We'll be late for the second house and I've lost my bunch of flowers. Let's start. Mossup's talking bores me stiff. I've had enough!"

"You've had too much," Mossup rejoined, and they went to get their hats.

John was relieved to see them go and, lighting his pipe, began to muse about his talk with Bob at Liverpool. He had inherited a small part of Water-tube John's estate, but he would sooner his uncle had appointed another trustee. He did not know much about

young women and his business was to manage the property of a girl who had perhaps some grounds to resent his taking control.

Bob had drawn Alice Elliot with a touch of humour John thought ominous. He pictured a generous, romantic, strong-willed girl; Bob stated that she had queer friends, of whom her relations did not at all approve. In fact, he implied that she was now staying with these friends, although her grandfather imagined she had gone to others about whom he was satisfied. Then Bob indicated that the Elliots were rash, proud, and extravagant. Their temper was not the Wreays' temper and the houses jarred. Yet John Wreay had loved the girl and he was very shrewd.

On the whole, John imagined he had an awkward job, and Bob agreed, but he would soon meet Alice, and he resolved to reserve his judgment. The politician's friend had talked about a second house, and John, calling a waiter, was directed to a music-hall.

For a time, he was amused. The conjurer was good and he had not watched a Lancashire clog-dance before, but the next turn bored him and he began to look about. After all, England was his father's country, and he studied the people. They had not the keen, alert look that marks a Canadian crowd. John did not know if they were dull, but he thought them slow. For the most part, their faces were colorless and their poses awkward; the shoulders of some who were not old were bent. That they labored in factories and mills was plain. They had not the rather aggressive confidence one noted in Canada, but when John studied them, he got a hint of dogged strength. If

these folk were slow, they were stubborn, and the stock from which they sprang was his. Something in him owned them kin.

Then his glance wandered along the seats in front of the orchestra. The house was not full and he had a chair near the middle of the row. The next two or three chairs were empty, and a girl occupied the first beyond the gap. John gave her a careless glance, and looked again, with some surprise.

Although he did not know much about women's clothes, he thought hers were good. Her figure was graceful; he saw her face in profile and liked its clean line. Her hair was brown, but when she moved her head it shone like burnished copper. Something about her indicated pride and high cultivation. In fact, John had not expected to see a girl like that at a second-class music-hall. The strange thing was, she was alone.

Then she turned her head and gave him a calm glance, and John fixed his eyes on the dancer who occupied the stage. He had not meant the girl to remark his curiosity, and although it was obvious that she had done so, he saw she would not own she was annoyed. Yet he was rebuked and knew she had struck the proper note.

By and by the young man he had met at the hotel pushed along the row from the other end. He carried a large, badly-crushed bunch of flowers, and stopped by John's chair. The passage was narrow and John had braced his feet against a chair in front. He noted with some surprise that the other looked at the girl and gave her an ingratiating smile. She did not turn her head, and John, imagining she meant

to indicate that she did not know the fellow, resolved to keep him back.

"Hallo! Met you again," the young man remarked in an unsteady voice. "Looks as if I'd lost my party, but they're a tedious lot and when Mossup starts talking about politics he makes you ill. Found my flowers; some drunk fool's sat on the bunch. But your legs are in the way and I can't get past."

"My legs are fixed just right; I don't want to move."

People behind began to grumble, but the young fellow gave John a meaning grin and indicated the empty chairs between him and the girl.

"Nothing doing, old man! She won't look at you."

John thought the girl heard, and he seized the other's coat.

"Sit down!" he said, and pulled.

The young man sat down, violently, and dropped the flowers.

"Blast you! My bokay's gone again," he said, and getting on hands and knees, began to grope about.

"Leave my boots alone!" a fat lady in front remarked and turned to John. "Your friend's a bit fresh."

"He's not my friend, but if you like, I'll fire him out," John replied in rather a loud voice. He owned he was perhaps ridiculous, but he wanted the girl to know.

"Let him bide," said the lady. "If he's boddersome, I'll soon put him straight."

John thought her able to do so and the young man got up. He had trodden on his bouquet, and ruefully studied the battered flowers.

"Bought them at a top-hole shop," he said. "Pat-

tinson's in Market Gate oughtn't to sell you stuff like this! Anyway, when I started there was a ribbon and silver paper."

"Stop talking! We didn't come to hear you," somebody remarked in an angry voice, and another shouted: "Throw the blighter out!"

"Let me get at the fellow!" the young man exclaimed, but John held him firmly and after a few moments he was quiet.

For all that, John did not let go his coat. The fellow had obviously meant to reach the chair next the girl's and might try again. John was resolved he should not annoy her and by and by gave her a quick glance. She looked straight in front, as if she were rather bored, and John approved her serene unconsciousness. Then his companion began to talk.

"Show's poor. Only one good turn. Wait for Number six, and you'll get something for your money. A boxing match has drawn the crowd, but they've got her for a week and I reckon she'll fill the house. Gimme a cigarette. That fool Mossup sat on mine."

John gave him a cigarette and looked at his programme. Number six was the next turn and he was mildly curious. So far, the performance had not excited much enthusiasm.

Number six went up and a girl carrying a violin crossed the stage. Her clothes, by contrast with the other artists', were primly sober, and her skin looked strangely colorless. When she bowed, her glance searched the row in which John sat and she smiled. Then she put the violin to her shoulder, swept the bow across the strings, and John knew she could play. He got a better hold of his companion's coat, but saw the

other did not need control. The young man leaned on the chair in front and everybody was quiet. Ringing chords and soft arpeggios rose and fell in waves of music against the dull beat of the orchestra, and then the staccato bow picked out the notes like the tinkle of silver bells.

John stopped smoking and gave himself to keen enjoyment. At Canadian logging camps men play the fiddle and some French-Canadians play with skill, but none John had heard played like this. Moreover, he had not thought to hear a great composer's work at a second-class music-hall. The strange thing was, the audience's enjoyment was as keen as his; John did not know the people of the bleak industrial North.

The girl lowered her violin and a storm of applause broke. She turned to the wings, but the people would not let her go, and John, in order to use his hands, loosed his companion's coat. The young man got up, unsteadily, lurched against a chair in front, and threw his battered flowers. The bunch hit the conductor and a jingling brass music-stand went down. The conductor stooped, and getting up with a frown, pitched the bouquet on the stage. For the most part, the blooms had gone; the bunch was a bundle of broken stalks. The thing lay at the girl's feet, but she did not turn her head and people who had cheered her began to laugh.

"That's for you!" shouted the young man. "Quite fresh when I got them at Pattinson's in Market Gate!"

The girl signed to the conductor, the prelude to a minuet began, and all was quiet. When she stopped, John saw a number of people were going and thought he had had enough. His companion pushed awkwardly along the row and John waited for a few mo-

ments in order to let him get in front. The girl farther along had vanished.

When he got to the street she stood at a neighboring door, from which the violin player came out. She said something to the other, looked round quickly, and they set off, going rather fast. John imagined they meant to walk home, although two or three taxi-cabs were at the corner. He thought it strange they were friends, since the girl he had studied in the hall was not, so far as he could see, the other's sort. This, however, had nothing to do with him, and he was going off when the young man who had thrown the flowers ran across the street.

"You don't mean to wait for me!" he shouted to the girls.

"Go away," said the musician and urged her companion.

"Very shy to-night; you wouldn't have my flowers," the young man remarked. "All the same, I'm not going. I'll carry the fiddle and give you supper."

The girl did not turn and he seized her arm. John jumped and seized his.

"Get off! I'll hold the fellow," he said to the violin player.

He thought she hesitated, but the young man, turning savagely, knocked off his hat and tried to grapple, John was hard and muscular, and had firmly ruled heavy-handed lumbermen. The other was soft, but his pluck was good, and when John threw him back he struck him hard, kicked his hat across the street, and started after the girls.

John was cool. He knew his strength and did not want to injure the other. Moreover, people were com-

ing from the hall and to involve himself in a street disturbance was ridiculous. Signalling a taxi-cab, he ran past the other, and when the driver started the engine, put his hand on the musician's arm and pushed her to the door.

"Get on board!" he said.

It looked as if she did not altogether want to go, but the young man had arrived, and John firmly pushed her and her companion in. Then he signed to the driver and the cab rolled off. The young man ran after the cab for a few yards, until a big policeman crossed the street in front.

"Now," he said, "what's the bother about?"

John said there was not much bother and felt for a coin. The policeman's hand touched his, and then he turned to the young man with a majestic frown.

"You're lucky because the gentleman doesn't charge you. Get off!"

The fellow went, and John, picking up his damaged hat, took the other way and laughed. In England the law was efficient and cheap. He did not think he could have fixed the thing with a Western patrolman for half a dollar.

III

JOHN MEETS HIS WARD

BOB, driving from the station in the evening, stopped the car at a gate and John got down and looked about. A river ran, between thin birchwoods, down the dale, but near the gate the trees rolled back. For a mile or two in front John saw smooth pasture, the darker green of corn, and cold blue turnip fields. Then rough, yellow hill-slopes, curving round, cut his view. Behind the hills, broken mountains went up into silver mist. Rain had not long stopped and the light was puzzling. Sometimes all was distinct and clean-cut, the wet stones shone and the grass sparkled; sometimes all was soft and blurred.

"Look the other way," said Bob when John got up.

John turned and saw the holm country roll back from the mouth of the dale. White birch trunks and lichened walls broke the foreground, but beyond all was green, a wonderful half-luminous green John had not known in Canada. In the distance the green melted to diaphanous blue, and a silver streak marked the sea. There was something ethereal and elusive about the landscape's beauty.

"Allerdale's out of the wind, and trees grow," said Bob. "Down on the holms it blows for ever. In a few minutes you'll see the house."

They ran across the pasture, and a fold of the hills

opened out. A grey house with massive outbuildings occupied the bottom of a slope and John's interest was keen. Ruthwaite had no claim to beauty and was not at all like the decorated wooden houses he knew in Canada. Straight-fronted and without ornament, it extended left and right from a low square tower, and John thought the buildings on the wings were barns.

When the car stopped he noted a roughly-carved helmet and horn above the great door. A lady with smooth black hair and a gentleman, whose hair was white, received him, and he thought them kind. He did not know their waiting on the steps was a courtesy they would not have paid another.

"We have used your house, John, but we are glad you have arrived to take control," the lady said.

John gave her a keen glance and smiled. Although she was not his relation, he thought her voice and manner like his father's; he imagined English people of her sort sometimes implied more than they said.

"Why, of course, you used the house, ma'am! I want to thank you for your care, and hope you'll keep control."

They took him in, and when Bob went with him to his room, Mrs. Franklin looked at Hugh Elliot.

"He's keen," she said. "I liked his bow and his reply; but he's obviously a Wreay."

"That is so," Hugh agreed. "For a moment I thought I was young again and Water-tube John had come back. It looks as if your doubts were not altogether justified."

"Oh, well!" said Mrs. Franklin. "Perhaps Alice ought to have come down."

Hugh's eyes twinkled. "I expect you know why she

did not, and saw there was no use in meddling; but I'm not remarkably sorry her proper trustee has arrived. If you study young John, you get a hint of firmness. In fact, I begin to doubt if his uncle's will really is extravagant."

"I have not known an extravagant Wreay," Mrs. Franklin agreed.

Some time afterwards John came down to the big hall that had been the farm kitchen before his uncle remodelled the house. The light was going, but John noted the crooked beams, fastened by wooden pegs, the wide, arched fireplace, built for burning logs and peat, and the floor of green-slate slabs. Water-tube John had added a Jacobean mantel-piece and some brown paneling. The stairs up the wall were narrow, the newel posts were carved and carried tall copper lamps. The hall looked bare and cold, but John thought its austerity dignified and felt it somehow harmonized with its last owner's character. The curtains and rugs were, no doubt, concessions to the Elliot temperament, but hardly softened the harsh predominant note. Although it was a summer evening, a log fire burned in the long, old-fashioned grate. John thought his uncle would have gone without the fire.

John wore an American dinner jacket; his other clothes were new and rather tight. His face was grave and brown; he was tall and strongly, but not heavily, built. Hugh noted that the lines of his figure were, for the most part, straight. Hugh himself was tall and thin; his hair was like frosted silver and his skin was pink.

By and by somebody came from the gloom of the landing above, stopped for a moment, and then came

down the stairs. It was a girl and John thought her figure light and finely poised, but he could not yet see her properly. Then she reached the beam from the windows, and he turned from Hugh. John's habit was not to start when he was surprised; the frozen North had given him something of the Indian's calm. He stood very still, his eyes fixed on the girl, and imagined she would get a jar.

In the fading beam from the windows her hair was copper-red, her skin very white, and her short, low dress was soft, glimmering green. John knew she saw him and knew he had, not long since, pushed her firmly into a taxi-cab, but when she crossed the floor she was very calm.

"I expect you heard your trustee arrive but resolved to conquer your curiosity. Well, this is John," said Hugh and turned to John. "My grand-daughter Alice, and, in a sense, your ward."

Alice gave John her hand and looked at him quietly. He was puzzled, for he had expected a touch of hesitation or perhaps a look to hint he must not talk about their meeting. Nothing indicated that Alice had seen him before. He did not remember what she said to him, but he liked the smile she gave Hugh.

"Perhaps it's strange, but I was satisfied with the guardian I know."

"Now you have another," Elliot remarked with some dryness. "I am willing to let him undertake part of my responsibility."

"I wonder——" Alice said and turned to John. "Are you used to ruling people? You look rather firm."

"I have run a lumber gang and Indian dog-sledge

freighters. All the same, I don't know much about up-to-date young women."

Alice laughed. "At Allerdale, we are not remarkably up-to-date. The hills are a natural refuge for the survivors of the old school. Perhaps, however, Bob——"

She stopped, for Mrs. Franklin and Bob joined them and they went to dinner. The dining-room roof was low, but the casement windows were new and wide. John saw black trees and dark-blue hills cut a belt of red and yellow sky. He was next to Alice and she engaged him and Bob in careless talk. Sometimes he thought she studied him, but he did not know and when she talked to Bob he pondered. It was obvious that Mrs. Franklin and Hugh would not approve her adventure at the music-hall; John almost doubted if she were indeed the girl he had pushed into the cab. Yet she had not indicated that he must keep her secret. He wondered whether she knew he would do so, or if she were proud and would not ask his help. He thought she was proud, and weighing her coolness, saw she had qualities he must reckon on. Anyhow, he imagined he had an awkward job.

After dinner John talked to Hugh in the smoking-room and then went to bed. In the morning he got up at six o'clock, looked into the white-tiled bathroom, got a towel, and smiled. When one could hear a river, he had not much use for bathrooms, and pushing through a wet birchwood, he found a pool. At one end the current plunged across a ledge, and then revolved in angry eddies round the deep basin. John pulled off his clothes, kicked a white stone from the bank, threw up

his arms, and plunged. When he dressed he went up the hillside between scattered limestone blocks and through belts of fern. Sparkling drops clung to the bracken and his feet sank in soft wet moss.

At the top he stopped and looked across a heathy tableland to a mountain range drawn in blue on the eastern sky. Then he turned and saw the green holms, lined by woods, roll down to the marshes by the sea. The rising sun picked out the hollows where white mist lay, but the bright beams were getting hot and John presently plunged down the hill. At the bottom he found a high slate-slab wall and opened a little door. Inside he saw apple trees, smooth grass, and long rose beds. Alice stood by a bush and the red flowers shone against her white dress

"Do you like gardens?" she asked when John came up.

"I like this garden," he replied. "It, so to speak, breaks on you. Until you open the door, you don't expect the belts of yellow, white, and red."

"The North is bleak and some roses are tender. One must fight for one's garden, and your uncle built the wall."

John nodded. "In my country, one fights for all one gets. Before we worked up a quick-ripening wheat, the fall frosts shriveled the grain. Then we experimented against the smut-blight, tried to hold up driving sand, and irrigated the dry belts. Now Nature's got after us with a new thistle. The plant has shallow roots and the strong winds roll it across the plain. It drops seed as it goes and the stalks make trouble in the binder. But I don't want to bore you."

Alice cut a rose and gave him a level glance. "When my grandfather presented you, you played up rather well."

"I'm not sure I get that right."

"Yet you know you met me at the music-hall!"

"I ought not to forget you. All the same, sometimes I do forget."

Alice laughed, but a touch of color came to her skin.

"Perhaps your object's good, John; but if you feel your duty is to talk about the adventure, you must not, for my sake, be quiet."

John weighed this. Although he had lived much in the wilds, he was not a fool.

"Your object's rather plain; you don't want me for an accomplice. Anyhow, to my friends, I'm *Jake.*"

"I don't yet know if you are my friend; you're my trustee, but 'that's another thing," Alice rejoined. "However, when you saw I was the girl you met at the music-hall, did you not get a jolt?"

"Not altogether a jolt, but I allow I began to think—— You see, John Wreay gave me control."

"For a year or two, you control my estate. Nobody controls me."

"Well," said John dryly, "I imagined something like that."

He thought Alice pondered, but when she looked up her eyes twinkled.

"To understand things helps. At the music-hall you took a very proper line. For example, two chairs between us were not occupied, but you were satisfied with yours."

John looked at her hard. "I don't know England yet, and particularly, I don't know much about English girls."

"It is perhaps possible," Alice remarked.

"Anyhow, unless a crowd had forced me along the row, I would certainly not have moved nearer you."

"Oh, well!" said Alice, "your resolve was rather plain, but I approved. In fact, I imagine I could have persuaded you an experiment was rash."

For a moment or two John was quiet, but he fixed his glance on her, and Alice was puzzled. He was now, like Water-tube John, inscrutable. She knew his uncle's strange veiled look.

"Why did you go to the music-hall?" he asked.

"I went because my friend, Miss Hall, was playing the violin. For two or three days I had stayed with her. Perhaps you ought to know I don't keep all Mrs. Franklin's rules. Ada is really a good sort, and after you bundled her into the cab she enjoyed the joke. For one thing, we lodged about two hundred yards off."

"I *put* your friend into the cab," John replied. "I did so because the young man meant——"

"Although one's object may be good, to meddle is sometimes rash. You see, had Jim been sober, Ada would have allowed him to join us. He's her cousin."

John laughed. "She looked as if she had not seen the fellow before! You looked——, but perhaps my having no sisters accounts for my surprise. Well, my uncle surely made a puzzling will. However, the will was made and I must carry my load."

"Perhaps, for a wayward girl's trustee, you are not very old," Alice remarked.

"I reckon you know how old I am."

"You are keener than I thought," said Alice, smiling. "But I expect breakfast will soon be served and we must go. You may carry the basket."

IV

THE FIRST JAR

HUGH ELLIOT occupied an easy chair in the tower room and John the window seat. The room was not large, the narrow windows were sunk in the thick wall, and the furniture was plain and old. Hugh's modern easy chair struck a jarring note, for Water-tube Wreay had used the room for his office and John thought its austerity typical. The shelves carried a few padlocked iron boxes and big dusty books, the heavy oak table a desk and tall brass candlesticks. The floor was bare; the boards had worn hollow and the hard knots stood up.

When Ruthwaite was built the yeomen farmers began with the pele tower, and as their wealth grew carried short wings left and right. Then, if the moss troopers gave them peace, strong barns enclosed the square behind the house, but all was planned for defense against the Scots. Noting the rude solidity of their work, John thought he got a hint about his ancestor's character. He had known men like them in the West, for the old type did not run out. Water-tube John went into the picture; Hugh Elliot did not.

Hugh was old, but one rather remarked his fastidiousness than his age. His gray clothes hung exactly as John thought clothes ought to hang; his skin was pink and lightly lined, his voice was cultivated. Yet his glance was languid and as a rule he looked tired. His long thin hands rested on a bundle of documents.

"You could rent the house and shooting-rights, John," he said presently. "Swinset, down the dale, is mine and I can turn out the sporting tenant at Martinmas."

"If you'll give me the tower and the next room, I'd much sooner you and Mrs. Franklin stayed," John replied. "I don't yet know my plans, but I may go back by and by. Anyhow, I can't see why my uncle gave me the house."

"Particularly since he did not give you much of the estate?" Hugh said with a smile. "Well, John's will rather surprised us, and it soon began to look as if he were not as rich as we had thought. All the same, I imagine Alice has enough and Bob can buy a good doctor's practice when he finishes his studies at the Edinburgh hospital."

"Don't you know Alice's fortune?"

"I know John Wreay's will, but the present value of the legacy is another thing. It has shrunk since your uncle died."

"But he appointed you trustee."

Hugh shrugged. "I am not a business man, and in this country one employs a lawyer or an accountant. However, I have had some useful help. Philip Franklin, my daughter's relation, belongs to an old-fashioned banking house and, until Franklin's joined the combine, was at the office. You must meet him."

"I want to meet him," John remarked, rather dryly. The balances do not get larger."

For a few moments Hugh was quiet and John thought he pondered. Then he looked up.

"To know you had arrived was some relief. For

a country gentleman to meddle with complicated investments is rash, and perhaps I was satisfied to sign the documents the lawyer brought. All the same, I imagine John Wreay's fortune began to melt before his death. He had sold the boiler-works, for cash and some shares, to a new company, but the company did not prosper when he retired. For the most part, the money he got was invested in land; John bought at a high price and farm rents have gone down. He reopened the old Ruthwaite mine and we are carrying on, but the work is expensive and the ore is poor. To put all straight is now your business."

"I am John Wreay's nephew. Is this going to make trouble?"

"You will have my support," said Hugh in a quiet voice. "For long your uncle was my bitter antagonist; in the end he was my friend. I am the head of the house, but not all the family, and you may find some opposition."

"I have been up against opposition in Canada," John replied.

Hugh let him go and he went to the garden and lighted a cigarette. He saw Hugh was not a business man, but must be reckoned on. When one pondered his remarks, it was plain that he had implied something although he had not stated much. For example, it looked as if Franklin had really managed the estate. Reserve like Hugh's, however, was apparently an English habit, and John began to look about.

A slate wall, dotted by little tufts of fern, closed one side of the garden. The other side was open, but for a low hedge, in front of which tall delphiniums grew. Across the hedge, the bent-grass and mossy

belts on the hill shone in the sun, and the vivid blue of the flowers cut against the silver ocher. White clouds floated overhead and their shadows trailed slowly across the yellow slopes. Although the sun shone, the light was soft and the landscape marked by the vague elusive beauty of the North.

Presently Alice opened a gate by the delphiniums. Her dress and big hat were white; in the sun her hair was like red gold and John thought her eyes reflected the iridescent blue of the delphiniums. He got up and frowned unconsciously. Had Alice's charm been less, his job would be easier.

"Don't go away," she said. "You have been talking to grandfather; talking about business, I expect. Have you found out much? Am I very rich?"

"If you don't know how rich you are, to put you wise is Mr. Elliot's part. Since he has not told you, I guess I'd better not."

"You're not rash," said Alice, smiling. "Grandfather has not put me wise; I don't think he really knows. The Elliots don't bother about money."

"Sometimes one is forced to bother," John remarked. "Anyhow, I'm a Wreay."

Alice gave him a thoughtful glance. "It's rather obvious, John. For all that, my step-father, the other John Wreay, was kind, and in some ways I think you're like him. Well, am I rich enough to spend two hundred pounds?"

"It depends," said John. "Why do you want two hundred pounds?"

"You heard Ada play the violin. Don't you think she has talent?"

"It's possible; I'm not a musician. Suppose she has talent?"

"Now you are very like Water-tube John—when he was not kind. When one bothers grandfather his voice is soft and he's urbane; John's was sharp and he knitted his brows. His rule, however, was to indulge me, and I really don't want very much. All you need do is to write a check."

"Why do you want the check?"

Alice sighed and her look indicated that she tried for resignation. "A trustee has drawbacks and Philip did not bother me like you. He took the check to grandfather and told him to sign. Well, Ada's talent is marked, but talent must be cultivated and she is poor. Sometimes, when her luck is good, she gets a turn at a music-hall; she ought to play at first-class concerts. I want her to study with proper masters."

"You are generous," said John. "Have you talked to Mr. Elliot about your plan?"

"I have not, and you must not. Grandfather doesn't like Ada."

"Then, I reckon I can't give you the check."

Alice turned to him quickly and the blood came to her white skin.

"The money is mine!"

"That is so, but I'm accountable and have control."

"You really think you can prevent my doing what I want to do?" Alice inquired, with a scornful glance.

"If you're resolved to give Miss Hall two hundred pounds, I mean to try."

"After all, you are sometimes rash," Alice remarked and went off.

John knitted his brows and lighted a fresh cigarette, but soon afterwards saw Hugh cross the grass.

"Alice did not stay long," Hugh remarked.

John was puzzled. He did not think the girl's voice had carried far, and Hugh had come from the rose garden behind the wall. When he reached the door Alice had gone.

"Did you expect to find Miss Elliot?"

"I knew she was about. Then I imagined your look was thoughtful and I see the gate in the hedge is open."

"But what has the gate's being open to do with my thoughtful look?"

Hugh smiled. "Alice knows that unless we shut the gate the sheep come in and damage the flower-borders. Not long since, her habit was to leave it open when she was annoyed. Sometimes young women are not very logical."

John thought Hugh was curious. He rather wanted to give him his confidence, but hesitated. For one thing, Hugh might find out about Alice's adventure at the music-hall.

"Oh, well," he said, "Miss Elliot wanted to know if she was rich, and I tried to persuade her she must use economy. In the woods, we're a frugal lot, but I reckon she didn't see my arguments. Perhaps this accounts for it."

"It's possible; Alice is not frugal," Hugh agreed with some dryness. "I imagine you see tact is needed!"

John saw, but resolved to make an experiment. "I understand Miss Elliot was not at home when I arrived

at Liverpool. For her to come back to meet me was kind."

"She was stopping with friends and did not return for a week after we expected her," Hugh replied. "Had you not gone to London, she would not have been at Ruthwaite when you did arrive. Well, I want to find the gardener."

He crossed the grass and John mused. Alice's relations did not know she had stopped with the violin-player for the extra week. John had imagined something like this, but it was not altogether his business, and he presently started for a walk across the hills.

When he returned for dinner he was curious about the line Alice would take, and to find her friendly was some satisfaction, since it looked as if her resentment did not last long. After dinner Hugh went off and Mrs. Franklin was occupied. John went to the terrace and lighted his pipe.

All was very quiet but for the splash of the river. Blue hills cut the sky, thin mist streaked the trees down the dale, and the rolling low country was getting dim. John felt the coolness of the dew and smelt mown grass and flowers. Then he heard a step on the slate-slabs and turned quietly. Alice had come out and went to a stone bench opposite. She wore a fashionable dinner dress and her skin shone like ivory against the soft dark material.

"It's plain I'm not revengeful, but if you would sooner smoke than talk, I'll go back," she said.

John leaned against the terrace wall and smiled. "Why do you reckon I would sooner smoke?"

"When you turned, I noted a mark across the middle of your forehead. It meant something."

"Oh, well!" said John, "I admit I didn't want to talk about Miss Hall."

Alice gave him a quiet look. "If you knew me better, you would not provoke me when I'm not keen to fight. But we'll let it go. Did you tell Hugh I wanted a check?"

"I did not."

"And you did not tell him about your meeting Ada and me at the music-hall?"

"Perhaps I ought to have done so, but I didn't. All the same, you didn't hint that I must not."

Alice smiled. "If you imagined I would ask you to keep a secret, you were cheated. Then, perhaps, I knew you would not talk. I doubt if you're very clever, but I think you a white man. That's good Canadian, isn't it?"

"It will go. Well, sometimes I am dull, and I reckon my dullness is a drawback. In fact, I'd sooner another had my job. Still, you see, it is my job."

"You undertook to manage my estate. If you stop there, it's possible we won't dispute."

"I reckon you indicated something like this before, but I'll be satisfied to stop. After all, to keep the bank-roll gives one a pull."

Alice laughed and got up. "If you pull hard, John, you will be rash. Perhaps you ought to cultivate a light touch. Yours is not at all light. For example, you tried to choke Ada's cousin, and threw her into the cab——"

"I lifted Miss Hall on to the step, and then pushed her gently forward," John declared.

"In England, one does not lift strange young women," Alice rejoined. "You cannot use the rules you used with the lumber gang."

She went into the house and John leaned against the wall, with a crooked smile. When John's humor was rather grim the corner of his mouth went up.

V

JOHN LOSES HIS HAT

THE high top of the moor shone yellow, but the light had left the lower slopes and blue shadow gathered in the dale. Although pale reflections touched the river, the woods were getting dim and the thin, white birch trunks glimmered against a dark background. Alice occupied a ledge on the rocky bank and studied John, who disentangled her fishing line.

"You are very patient!" she remarked. "Why don't you cut the trace?"

"It's fine gut, and in the woods we don't cut up good stuff. A trace like that would cost half a dollar."

"Extravagance is not the Wreays' habit. But you are getting to know us at Allerdale. What do you think about us?"

"I think you altogether charming. Mrs. Franklin's kind and tries to make allowances. Sometimes Bob cautiously guides me and sometimes owns me head of the house. Hugh's polite and agrees when he can, although my point of view is not always his. I feel he strikes the proper note. I don't know if I jar or not, and I like Hugh because he doesn't let me know."

"It looks as if you left me out."

John smiled. "Sometimes you're as charming as your relations."

"Your guarded approval is something," Alice rejoined. "What do you think about England?"

"Allerdale is beautiful. Your high fells are a noble playground, but I don't know much about England yet. When I have seen your cotton-mills, mines, and furnaces, I'll tell you what I think."

"Ah," said Alice, "you are like your uncle; he was horribly practical."

"Yet you declared you loved Water-tube John!"

"I loved him because he was kind; not because he was practical."

"You imply I've got his drawbacks?" said John. "Perhaps we're not romantic in Canada. Our life is pretty stern——"

A smile lingered about his crooked mouth, but Alice noted his veiled look. He saw an angry river, swollen by melted snow, and rows of pine logs plunging down the skids into the flood. Men who carried long poles leaped about the rolling trunks, until the top of the savage rapid was near. Then the men jumped and the logs were swept away by the white turmoil. The picture melted and another grew—— The stars were keen as steel, but the dawn was breaking and the scrub willows were black against the snow. The camp was north of the forest-belt and the fire was very small. The sledge-dogs fought, and men with numbed hands in board-hard mittens lashed up the heavy loads. Flesh and blood shrank from another journey in the Arctic cold—— Then John roused himself.

"After all, we're at Allerdale, and if people play, I allow they play gracefully."

"All do not play gracefully," Alice rejoined. "Some are greedy about their sport. The trout we have

caught are small, but you can get fish that weigh a pound in the deep holes up stream, where we must not go. Until Markham bought Scarfoot, we fished all the water."

"Then did Hugh sell his fishing rights to Markham?"

"He did not," said Alice, knitting her brows. "I do not understand it properly, but Markham disputed our claim. We always had fished the water, but the lawyers seemed to think our title was not good, and Markham had bought the bank. He said, if we would state when we wanted a day on the river—— But this was unthinkable!"

"Hugh does not like Markham?"

"Hugh's school is the old school. Markham owned an iron foundry and is not our sort."

"Your step-father owned a boiler-works."

"John Wreay was a dear; I loved him. Well, the old school is going and the new people push us out. I expect they have some virtues, but I don't know Markham's yet. He declares he's going to run Scarfoot on business lines; he has cut down good game covers, burned the gorse, and is digging drains. The farmers imagined they had got the landlord they wanted, but Markham charged them five per cent. for the improvements, and now I think they doubt. It's obvious grandfather could not agree with a man like that!"

John admitted that agreement was hard. As a rule, Hugh was fastidiously polite, but his prejudices were numerous, and when he was annoyed his quiet remarks stung. If Markham were like some industrial

bosses John had known, he could picture Hugh's antagonism.

"We haven't caught many fish," he said. "In Canada, trout rise best just before it's dark. Let's push on and try another pool."

They went up stream and by and by Alice stopped at an old wall. It was a dry wall, built without mortar, and John thought a gap had been mended recently. He noted that Alice frowned and looked about.

"Somebody has put back the slabs," she said. "Not long since one could jump over."

"Do you want to get over?"

Alice hesitated. "The pool at the corner is very good. If the evening's hot and you use the white moth in the half-light, you can reckon on a big fish."

The river curved and John, looking over the wall, saw that dark alders grew along the bend. Their tops were sharp against the yellow sky, but among the trunks the shadow was deep. At the corner the river widened to a pool, and he knew the current followed the inward curve. When the alder branches moved, faint reflections played about the rippled surface. If one could throw a fly across the top eddy, a trout ought to rise.

"Let's try it," he said. "I'll leave the basket. I guess you won't go much farther?"

"We'll come back when we have fished the pool," Alice replied.

She put her hand on John's shoulder, seized a branch, and was on the top of the wall. John had not thought a girl could move like that, but she laughed and jumped down, and he got over with the rod and net. Stealing

up under the branches, she balanced on an alder root and jerked the light-colored fly across the stream. The cast was awkward, but the fly reached the spot John had marked. Then it vanished, he heard a splash, and the rod bent.

"Some trout!" he said. "You must get below him. I'll steady you."

The alder root was treacherous, but, keeping the rod butt down, Alice stepped lightly back. For a moment John was strongly tempted to put his arm round her waist and lift her to firmer ground. He did not. The thing was, of course, ridiculous, and they would lose the trout.

Alice reached the hollow bank, and for a few moments stood, tensely posed, while the reel hummed and the line sped across the revolving eddies. Then she moved slowly back to a gravel bed at the tail of the pool, and after a time John got into the stream. A silvery object flashed in the turmoil, leaped out, and, falling back, drifted down on its side. John pushed the net up-stream and with a cautious lift swung the trout to the bank.

"Quite a pound!" he said.

"I could not have landed it if you had not been about. You were very cool and quick," Alice replied.

John saw she enjoyed her triumph, but she presently turned her head and he thought her glance was fixed on the fern that rolled up hill behind a broken hedge.

"Oh!" she said, "somebody's in the bracken. I expect it's Markham's gamekeeper!"

"Markham's gamekeeper won't bother you, but, if he does, I'll soon send him off."

"You don't understand," said Alice. "For the fel-

low to catch us would annoy grandfather horribly. You see, the pool is *Markham's.*"

John thought Hugh's annoyance might be justified. He, himself, was angry, but in the meantime this was not important. Alice must get away, and for a moment or two he studied the ground. The fern was some distance off, the light was going, and beneath the alders the gloom was deep. Alice's gray clothes were not unlike a man's, and John doubted if the gamekeeper had seen two people. Across the stream, about a hundred yards off, was a big, dark wood.

"Take the rod and net and get back to the wall. Keep behind the trees," he said.

"If the gamekeeper catches you, my going won't help much."

"Don't talk! Get off!" John said sternly, and Alice gave him a quick glance and went.

John started up-stream, away from the wall, between the alders and the hill. He wanted the gamekeeper to see him, but when he got near the head of the pool he plunged noisily through the branches and, turning back for some yards, dropped into the water. He heard the gamekeeper's shout and somebody's answer from the other side. It looked as if two men were on his track, but he hoped the first imagined he had gone across. In the meantime, he was in the gloom of the branches, up to his waist in water, with his shoulders against the hollow bank. So long as he did not move, to see him would be hard.

A man came down the bank, stopped for a few moments, a yard or two from John, and then went to the wall. John imagined he could not see if the grass and meadow-sweet on the other side were tram-

pled. The trouble was, the fellow stopped by the wall and the water was very cold. For all that, John did not mean to come out yet. If he were caught, Markham would have some grounds for complaint, and when Hugh found out that Alice's poaching had given the fellow power to bother him his annoyance would be keen. In fact, John saw he must not be caught.

The gamekeeper came back, passed the trees, and went up the bank. He did not make much noise and when his steps died away John pondered. All was quiet, but he did not know how far the fellow had gone nor where the other was. He could, no doubt, reach the wall, but, if the men were watching, to jump over and make for Ruthwaite would put them on his track. John rather thought he would go the other way; the big wood was not far off and across the stream a hedge ran down to the water.

He crawled out, stole up the bank, and wading the noisy rapid at the head of the pool, reached the hedge. For a minute or two he stopped and looked about. It was now dark, but on a summer night one can see some distance, and the wood was distinct, across a field behind the hedge. On the other side of the wood a farm road went down the dale. The hedge was thick and the grass in which John stood was tall; in fact, John had not seen as good a hay crop in Canada. He thought he had not made much noise, but he was not satisfied. He was up against gamekeepers and knew that men who study wild birds and animals are keen.

Stealing along the hedge, he presently noted a break in its dark outline, as if a gate opened on the pasture between it and the wood. He must cross the pasture soon, but he hesitated. Somehow he did not like the

dark gap and he turned off for a few yards into the grass. When he was nearly level with the gate, an indistinct object in the corner blocked the openings between the bars. John thought the object moved, and began to run.

A man jumped out and started after him. John wanted to stop, but saw it would be rash, because he imagined the fellow's companion was not far off. Besides, if he knocked out the gamekeeper, Markham would no doubt put the police on his track. To run away was ridiculous, but John did not see another plan.

In the long grass one could not run fast. Although he thought he could beat the gamekeeper, the field was small, and if there was not another gate, it would be awkward. He could make better speed across the smooth pasture and he studied the hedge. By and by he noted a weak spot, crossed by a slanted rail. He swerved into the grass and heard the keeper follow; then he swerved again and jumped for the gap.

His feet struck the rail and he lurched forward. A branch whipped his face and tore his skin; another branch caught his jacket, but he broke through and came down in the pasture. The gamekeeper did not jump, and John imagined he could cover some distance while the fellow struggled with the thorns. The man, however, was soon on his track, and in the meantime John heard another run across the field. He thought this man came across obliquely in order to cut him off, and he used his best speed.

After a few minutes he saw a fence in the gloom of the trees, jumped across, and plunged into the wood. Stealing through the underbrush as quietly as possible, he saw an opening ahead that looked like a drive, and

without altogether stopping, turned his head and looked round. The gamekeepers were not far off and since he heard them, he imagined they heard him. Then he struck his foot against a root and, staggering for a yard or two, fell into a hollow behind some briars at the edge of the drive. The wood was dark, but John thought one could see for a short distance along the drive, and resolved he would not get up.

The others swerved to avoid the briars, ran past the hollow, and started down the drive. John waited until he could not hear them, and then started the other way. He laughed, but presently felt his forehead smart where the thorns had struck, and putting up his hand found he had not got his hat. This was awkward, but to go back and search the ground might be rash, and on the whole he thought his hat had fallen off when he dropped into the pool. Crossing a few fields, he reached the farm-road and followed it down the dale. His clothes were wet, his face was scratched, and he thought his jacket was torn; but he had rather enjoyed the adventure. All the same, he would sooner he had not lost his hat. A Montreal storekeeper's name was stamped on the lining, and if the hat were found, the finder would probably know it was his.

When he went up the drive at Ruthwaite John knitted his brows. He imagined he looked like a Western hobo after a fight, and people who stopped at English country houses did not return in torn, bedraggled clothes from an evening's sport. He could picture Hugh's amusement and Mrs. Franklin's rather shocked surprise. Besides, he did not want to account for his getting into the pool. It was obvious that he must quietly make for his room.

The hall door was open and nobody was about. John stole across the floor and up the stairs. A lamp burned on the newel post at the bottom, but the landing above was dark, and he began to hope, he might reach his room. His luck, however, was not good. When he turned the corner a light shone along the passage, and a woman's figure cut against the illumination. John thought it was Mrs. Franklin and somebody behind her carried a candle, but he could not see her properly because the light was in his eyes. The trouble was, Mrs. Franklin could see him.

"Why, John!" she exclaimed.

Then the light went out, something struck the carpet, and Alice said, "I've dropped the candle!"

John pushed past Mrs. Franklin and reached his door. When he turned the handle he felt a light touch on his arm.

"You're a sport, Jake! When you come down, wait for your cue and play up to me," Alice said in a quiet voice.

Then she was gone and John shut his door.

VI

ELLIOT'S ADVISER

ALTHOUGH John got up at daybreak and searched the dewy fields he did not find his hat, and imagined it had floated down the river. A day or two afterwards he came one morning from the road, where he had met the post, and found Alice on the terrace steps.

"Bring the letters to the iron table; I'll pick out mine," she said.

John fetched her a garden chair and put down the bundle the postman had given him.

"These are yours," said Alice, pushing across an envelope and a cardboard box. "This is for my aunt from Bob. I expect they have let him off at the hospital and he's coming down. The others are grandfather's; I think I know the hands."

"You imply you're glad to know who wrote the letters?"

"Sometimes you're rather keen, John, but I was curious," Alice admitted. "You see, since our adventure at the pool, I have half expected a stiff little note to arrive from Markham. Perhaps you can picture grandfather's getting pink when he read the note; anyhow, I can. Well, Markham has not written."

"I don't know that you deserve to get off."

"Perhaps I do not," Alice agreed. "Still I'd got Bob to pull the top slabs off the wall, and when I saw

Markham had built it up again I was annoyed. One doesn't like to be baffled. However, you helped me to catch his trout and put his gamekeepers off the track. I rather expected you to cheat the gamekeepers, but when you came into the drawing-room I was disturbed. To cheat grandfather and Aunt Helen is another thing."

"You did not leave me much to do," said John, and knitted his brows.

He had thought Hugh looked at Alice hard when he declared the trout was the best that had for long been caught in the Ruthwaite water. Alice frankly agreed, and with even calm baffled Mrs. Franklin's curiosity. John did not know if he altogether approved her calm.

"Oh well," she said, "I tried to clear the ground before you arrived, but you played up better than I thought. Why do you frown?"

"For one thing, I'm your trustee," John remarked with some dryness. "May I open my letter?"

The letter was from Franklin, who stated that since he understood John was examining the estate accounts, he would arrive in the evening and give him particulars. John gave the letter to Alice.

"Mr. Franklin will, no doubt, stay the night. Why didn't he inform your aunt?"

"Ruthwaite is yours," said Alice. "We are really your guests."

"Oh, shucks!" said John. "What can I do with Ruthwaite if I take it from Hugh? The home I know best is a lumber-camp shack. In a few months I may pull out for the woods."

"When Water-tube John gave you Ruthwaite I

think he meant you to stay," Alice remarked. "But aren't you curious to see what is in the box?"

John opened the box and the corner of his mouth went up.

"It looks like my hat!"

Alice's face got red and her eyes sparkled, but John took out a note.

"'With H. S. Markham's compliments.' That's all," he said.

He had seen Alice's mood change before, and when she laughed he was not surprised.

"The man is better than I thought; he might have sent your hat to Hugh. I really think he's humorous and his joke is rather good."

"Perhaps I'm not humorous, but I don't quite get the joke!"

"Your humor's, so to speak, unconscious humor," Alice rejoined. "For example, when Ada's cousin met us at the hall, you tried to choke Jim."

"You stated something like this before. I did not try to choke Miss Hall's cousin; had I meant to choke him, I would have done so."

"Oh well; we won't dispute," Alice replied. "When Markham's gamekeeper saw you landing the trout you jumped into the pool, ran about the fields, and tore your clothes. All the same, Markham knew who caught the trout and I expect he was amused. You are very energetic, John, but I doubt if you are logical."

John was rather hurt. For one thing, Alice had resolved to fish the pool she knew was Markham's, and she had caught the trout. Then, when he had borne the consequences, she laughed. No doubt, she laughed when he put Miss Hall into the cab. Perhaps, how-

ever, his meddling was humorous, and the corner of his mouth went up.

"I'm logical as far as I see," he declared.

"After all, that is something; but your methods are rude."

"We'll let it go. What about Philip Franklin? I know he's your relation, but I haven't got him located yet."

"He is really not my relation. Philip is my aunt's husband's nephew, and when his father died he lived with his uncle. When Philip was at school his uncle died, and Mrs. Franklin went to Swinset, grandfather's house. Philip stopped with us for the holidays, and afterwards came over for week-ends from the bank."

"Still, I don't see what he has to do with your affairs."

Alice smiled. "In some ways, grandfather's clever, but not about money and Philip advised him; I really think the Elliots cannot count. At all events, when we want a thing we don't bother about the cost."

"On the whole, that's obvious," John remarked. "It looks as if Franklin indulged you!"

"Sometimes he is rather nice." Alice replied, and gave John an amused glance. "I hope you will like Philip, because he's a useful friend; but I expect breakfast is waiting."

They went to the house and in the evening Franklin arrived. After dinner he went with John to the room in the tower. Mist rolled about the hills, rain beat the windows, and one heard the flooded river brawl among the trees. The evening was dark and cold, and Franklin pulled a chair to the fire. He was a handsome fellow, with pale-blue eyes and an easy smile. His

skin was brown, and his muscles were hardened by open-air sports; he looked philosophically good-humored, but John noted that his mouth was firm and his glance was sometimes keen. Although John rather liked him, he reserved his judgment.

"Let's light the lamp," said Franklin. "One feels cold at Ruthwaite and the wind is dreary. The dales that open to the sea are bleak."

"The Canadian North is bleaker," John remarked.

"Oh well," said Franklin, "you are a hard lot. When your uncle altered Ruthwaite, central-heating was indicated, but I understand the architect who put a basement furnace in his plans got a jolt. John Wreay was not the man to spend three hundred pounds to warm his house. I rather think he liked it cold."

"You knew my uncle?"

Franklin smiled. "I knew John Wreay pretty well, and doubt if he altogether approved me; but you want to talk about Alice's inheritance."

"Oughtn't we to wait for Elliot?"

"If you like, but I imagine Hugh will not come up unless you send for him. He left much to me, and when you arrived I expect to let you have control was some relief. Well, I have brought Dalton's last statement of accounts."

John wondered whether Franklin had persuaded Hugh to stay down stairs, but he said, "Was it necessary for Hugh to employ a lawyer?"

"In the small English market-towns, the family lawyer is something of an estate agent, banker, and stock-broker. He collects your rents, gets you fresh tenants, and invests your money. The Daltons have transacted

the Elliots' business for three or four generations, and the present head of the house is shrewd and reliable."

John pulled the lamp forward and for a time concentrated on the accounts. He imagined Franklin studied him, but he did not look up. After his talk with Elliot, he had not expected to find Alice's inheritance well managed, but things were worse than he had thought.

"Land, farmsteads, and investments are all written down," he remarked. "It doesn't look like good business!"

"The fault is not Hugh's," said Franklin. "I don't think it's mine. John Wreay bought at top-price after a number of good years. Rents have since fallen and the Government has put fresh burdens on land. Then your uncle, so to speak, was the Water-tube company; he made the boiler and made it go. When he retired the business soon fell off; but you can't meddle there. The amount of stock we now hold in the company is small."

"We'll let that go. I don't like your writing down the farms. Cheap rents mean cheap farming; you want to put rents up. I see pasture growing rushes where you could grow hay, and soil that you ought to plough lying waterlogged. We have got a good fall to the river: what's the matter with digging drains? Then one could improve the homesteads, build better barns, put in machinery, and make the tenants pay."

"You don't yet know the dalesfolk," Franklin remarked with an indulgent smile that somehow annoyed John. "Besides, I see another drawback. Draining and building are expensive, and you have not much liquid capital."

"One can sell land that doesn't pay and bank on the rest."

"You can't sell. John Wreay stipulated the property must go to Alice intact, when she reached the age of twenty-five, or if she married before this with her trustees' approval."

"Now I think about it, that is so," John agreed. "A curious stipulation! It ties up the trustees."

"Your uncle generally had an object," Franklin remarked with a careless glance.

John began to get annoyed. He owned he had not much grounds, and Franklin was polite, but he got a hint of indulgence, as if the other were amused and made allowances for him.

"If my uncle had an object, his object isn't plain," he said. "But what about the mine? It costs us something, and we don't get much back."

"The mine is small and copper is cheap just now, but when the price goes up a pound or two, the mine will pay. Then the vein carries some silver and other metals we cannot yet refine. Are you a miner?"

John said he had found and developed one or two mineral claims—enough to get his patent. He was curious about the mine, but thought Franklin had told him all he knew. After a time Franklin lighted a cigarette.

"When you have seen Dalton I'll come over again," he said. "I expect you have had enough to-night, but before we go downstairs I want you to write me a check for two hundred pounds."

"Certainly. If it's a proper charge on the estate," said John, and waited.

"The money is for Alice. I understand she has made herself accountable for the sum."

John had imagined something like this, and he frowned.

"Miss Elliot's allowance is fixed and she ought to be satisfied. In fact, I don't see how she spends so much."

"The Elliots have a talent for spending money and Alice is a modern girl. All the same, I promised we'd try to indulge her, and she engaged to use economy."

"Nothing's doing," John said firmly. "I'm accountable and can't write the check unless Hugh agrees. You had better talk to him."

Franklin hesitated, and John wondered whether he had already talked to Hugh. Somehow John thought he had done so and Hugh had not agreed.

"Oh, well," said Franklin, "I don't know that the thing's important. The money, of course, is Alice's, but if you feel she's extravagant we must not bother you."

He went off, but for a time John stopped and pondered. Alice was obstinate; if she could not get what she wanted by one plan, she tried another. The money was hers, but John did not like Franklin's trying to get it for her by something like a trick. He imagined the fellow had not reckoned on his demanding particulars. Anyhow, his duty was obvious; Alice must not be allowed to squander the fortune for which he was trustee, and he strongly disapproved her giving Miss Hall two hundred pounds. The musician had perhaps some talent, but she was not a proper friend for Alice

In the meantime Alice met Franklin at the bottom of the stairs.

"Have you got the check?" she asked.

"I have not," Franklin replied. "Your new guardian's firm. I think he's persuaded you're extravagant."

"John is not my guardian," Alice rejoined with a touch of haughtiness. "He's my trustee, but that's another thing. All the same, his refusing is horribly awkward; Ada has let some fresh engagements go and got a master. Now all is fixed, I can't let her down."

"I wouldn't bother," Franklin replied. "Perhaps you are extravagant, but since you undertook to help Miss Hall we must see you out. You shall have the sum you want."

"You're very nice," said Alice, and went to the drawing-room.

When John came down he crossed the floor to the corner Alice and Mrs. Franklin occupied. Had Alice moved a little there was room for him on the big chesterfield, but she did not, and John joined Hugh. It was plain that Alice knew about his refusal, and although he thought Hugh did not, he remarked the old fellow's smile. Elliot was keen and knew his granddaughter.

VII

THE GHYLL

AFTER breakfast one morning John went to the bench on the terrace and opened the Montreal *Star*. By and by Alice came out, and when she advanced he put down the newspaper.

"I hope you are serene this morning, John," she said.

"So long as nobody bothers me I think I am serene, but for a time after Franklin came over I reckoned you were not," John rejoined.

"Oh well, you were obstinate; but I'm not revengeful, and I want to ask for something. If I brought a friend to visit us, would you mind?"

"Certainly not! For one thing, I'd sooner think I was your grandfather's guest than that he was mine. Anyhow, Ruthwaite's big enough for us and your friends."

"Now you're very nice! Well, I have asked Ada Hall to come over."

"Looks as if you meant me to agree before I knew! However, since my agreement was obviously not needed, I don't see much use in your caution."

"Your agreement is useful, Jake. I'm afraid you don't like Ada, and I doubt if aunt and grandfather will like her much. Still Ruthwaite is yours, and if they see you approve——"

The corner of John's mouth went up and he gave her a crooked smile.

"I knew you were smart, but you're smarter than I thought! My part's to persuade your relations I want Miss Hall to stay with us? Well, I've no grounds for not liking her; the trouble is, I don't think her a proper friend for you. Looks as if she'd helped you to some rash adventures."

"I'm really much rasher than Ada," Alice rejoined. "But when we agreed you were accountable for my property I thought you were satisfied. You didn't claim you were accountable for my friends."

"That is so. When Miss Hall comes to Ruthwaite I'll try to be polite."

"Thank you, Jake," said Alice, and went back to the house.

Two or three days afterwards Miss Hall arrived, and John admitted she was not the girl he had thought. For one thing, she was quiet, and when he sat next to her at dinner was friendly, but not at all keen to please him. In fact, he felt she, so to speak, reserved her judgment and he began to modify his. Then, although he thought she knew Mrs. Franklin studied her, she was not embarrassed, and she played up gracefully to Hugh's old-fashioned politeness.

When the lamps were lighted they went to the drawing-room and Miss Hall took out her violin. Alice opened the piano, gave her the tuning note, and they began to play. John thought they did not bother about the others; Hugh had asked for music, but they were playing for themselves. All was somehow business-like. Miss Hall turned a peg, nodded and brought down her bow. John heard sonorous chords, a high harmonic note like a flute's, and then smooth waves of melody.

He forgot his doubts. Perhaps he was not logical, but to doubt a girl who played like that was ridiculous. Although she had talent, talent was not all; fine music meant concentrated study and patient labor. To master the fiddle was, in a sense, the triumph of effort.

Yet John was disturbed. Alice had stated Miss Hall had gone as far as she could go without proper training, and he had refused to let Alice help. He had stopped the girl's making the progress she ought to make, and his doing so looked harsh. For all that, John Wreay had made him accountable for Alice's fortune, and his duty was plain. He was puzzled about another thing. He thought Alice had forgiven him his refusal and was resigned; but since she did not like to be baffled her resignation was strange.

In the morning Alice made up a party to gather cloudberry flowers. Bob was at Ruthwaite and Franklin brought two or three young men and women in his car. At noon they stopped for lunch on a boggy tableland, dotted by white flowers that of all English blooms open nearest the sky. When lunch was over and they had gathered a few bunches of the cloudberries, somebody said they would go home across the top of a neighboring crag. By and by the shoulder of the hill they followed got narrow and rough and the party drew out in a row. Alice told John to help Miss Hall and they gradually dropped behind the rest. John noted that the girl's face was thin and thought her tired.

"Do you want to go up the rocks?" he asked.

"I do not," she said, smiling. "Alice thought I ought, but I'm fresh from town and am not a mountaineer. Although the view and keen wind are glorious, I begin to feel I've had enough."

John looked about. The others had vanished across the top of a steep pitch, and he wondered whether Alice knew he and Miss Hall were some distance behind. He rather thought she did know; sometimes Alice had an object for her carelessness. Then he turned and studied the slope on one side. It was steep and rough, but little bilberry bushes covered the boggy soil, and in one place a narrow sheep-path went down. At the bottom, a long brown moor rolled back to the edge of a valley.

"Suppose we start for Ruthwaite by the shortest line?" he said.

They went down the slope and across the moor. Sometimes a grouse got up, skimmed the heath and dropped; sometimes a curlew's call, thrilling with a wild tremolo, came down from a boggy hill. But for the birds and the wind in the heather, all was quiet. White clouds rolled across the sky and speeding shadows touched the empty moor. One could not see a house or plume of smoke.

"After the crowded towns, it's desolate," Miss Hall remarked. "I had not thought one could find in England such wide, lonely belts."

"After all, you know when you reach the edge of a valley you'll see white farmsteads, cultivated soil, and woods that men have planted," said John. "In Canada it's not like that. The woods roll north to the barrens where nothing but moss can grow, and when you start the sledge team you feel the wilds run on for ever and no man but you has pushed across since the beginning. Perhaps it's six weeks' march to the snow-bound settlement you must reach before your food runs out——"

He stopped and Miss Hall noted that his glance was

blank and fixed. He looked across the moor, but she thought he did not see the rolling heath. Then he roused himself and laughed.

"Sometimes one remembers things one thought done with; but I guess you're tired and we want to make the dale."

From the hill the moor had looked smooth but the heather was tangled and the ground rolled in long undulations and shallow hollows. Miss Hall went slowly, and by and by John stopped at a little ravine, through which ran a stream.

"A creek is generally a good guide; we'll follow it to the river," he said. "In the meantime, suppose you take a rest?"

They found a nook where a bank kept off the wind and the sun was on the mossy stones. Close by, the little stream leaped across a shelf and sparkled in the bilberries. John lighted a cigarette and studied his companion. Her face was rather pinched, but he thought he liked her. Her glance was frank, and she had something of a man's confidence. One did not feel one must indulge her because she was a girl.

"You were kind to let Alice bring me to Ruthwaite; I do not often get a holiday," she remarked.

"In a way, Ruthwaite is as much Alice's as mine," John said, smiling. "Have you known her long?"

"Do you mean, how did I get to know her?"

"Perhaps I did mean something like that," John admitted.

"I was engaged to play a solo part for an amateur orchestra at a private charity concert. I had to travel a long distance by awkward trains and was tired and hungry. The others, of course, knew their hosts, but

I did not and was forgotten. Sometimes people don't bother about a hired musician, but Alice was kind. She saw I got food and sent me to the station in a car. It was rather a long way; the night was wet and my shoes were thin."

John mused. Perhaps it was strange, but of all the party, careless and wayward Alice had thought for the neglected stranger. His curiosity, however, was not satisfied.

"If Alice had not sent you to the station, you would have walked, in the rain?" he said.

"Of course! A second-class musician's reward for playing at an amateur concert is not large. Besides, I'm not used to luxury. Perhaps you have remarked I'm not Alice's sort?"

The corner of John's mouth went up and his eyes twinkled. "I reckon you are my sort. Until I came to Ruthwaite I worked for all I got. My father ran a sawmill in the Canadian bush."

"Mine kept a little shop that did not pay, in a shabby street, and when he died all was sold to pay our debts."

"It looks as if your luck had turned," said John. "You have a talent for music and are beginning to get engagements. I expect you'll make your mark."

"Sometimes I doubt! The engagements I do get lead nowhere. I have some skill; talent's another thing. Then if you have talent, it must be cultivated."

"You imply you have not cultivated yours?"

Ada was quiet for a moment or two, and then looked up. "I don't see why I should bore you, but perhaps, since Alice wants to help—— Well, good musical training is expensive and I was forced to go without, but I got some cheap lessons from a player whom liq-

uor had ruined, and I studied in the evenings when my proper work was done. Then I got a few engagements, took the plunge, and let my other occupation go."

John remarked her frankness, and pondered. Alice hated to be baffled, and had perhaps left them behind in order that Miss Hall might work upon his sympathy. All the same, he was satisfied Miss Hall did not know Alice's plan. For one thing, she was proud; he rather thought her pride accounted for her talking about her poverty. Her narrative disturbed him, because if he had indulged Alice, the girl would have got a chance to try her power. Yet, although two hundred pounds was not a very large sum, his refusal was justified.

"Since you are Alice's trustee, I thought you ought to know something about me," she resumed with a smile. "Alice is generous, but I really don't think she is very rash. If I have not much talent, I have skill enough to earn the money to pay her back. She declares she doesn't need the sum, and I need it much."

John turned rather sharply, and looked at her hard. "I want to get this right! Do you imply Alice is lending you the money to study with a proper master?"

"Of course! Didn't you know?"

"We talked about it," John replied, with an effort for carelessness. "I didn't know Alice had fixed the thing. Well, her habit's to hustle——"

He was quiet for a few moments and noted with some disturbance that Miss Hall studied him. He had got a jolt, but he was not going to let Alice down; in fact, he began to think her obstinacy was justified. Miss Hall had pluck and ought to get her chance.

"Then all's arranged?" he began at length.

"When I leave Rathwaite I begin my studies,"

Miss Hall agreed, and got up. "Perhaps we ought to start."

They followed a sheep-path down the ravine, which presently got deeper. The grass and heather vanished and sharp stones covered the banks. Then broken rocks closed in on the stream and the path went across the stones in the channel. In places pools spread from side to side, and to find a way round was hard. At length the top of the bank on one side rolled back, and a yellow hillslope shone in the sun. The hill was not far off, but there was a gap between it and the ravine. The inclined hollow seemed to stop at the bottom of the next steep pitch, and one heard water splash.

John's advance was cautious, and after a few minutes he had put his hand on Miss Hall's arm. She stopped and they looked down into a dark, forbidding rift cut in the side of a dale. Spray blew about the chasm, and a hundred feet below them the stream plunged into a foaming pool.

"We can't get down there!" Ada exclaimed.

"It doesn't look as if you could get up," John replied, and indicated the long wet slabs that dropped to the ghyll. "Well, I guess the proper plan is to go back."

"I'm tired," said Ada drearily. "The stones are very rough and it's all up hill."

John studied the ground. On their side of the stream a bank of small gravel ran back for perhaps twenty yards to a steep grassy slope, but he saw rocks below and doubted if one could cross the gravel. The edge of the chasm was, however, broken by shelves and ledges, with narrow belts of boggy moss between. He

saw he could get down, but he did not know about Miss Hall.

"Suppose I pull out and look for a farm?" he said. "I might get a rope and somebody to help."

"No," she said firmly. I won't be left!"

John nodded. For a tired girl from the cities, the spot was daunting. Moreover, the ghyll was in the shadow and was swept by a bleak wind.

"Very well. If you brace up, I reckon we can make the dale."

Ada set her mouth, forced a smile, and gave him her hand. He jumped to a ledge and helped her down, steadied her across a yard or two of treacherous moss and reached another ledge. For the most part, the broken, tilted strata was like stairs, but some of the steps were long, and on one side the rock fell straight to the pool. John's hands were occupied, but rock-climbers trust their feet, and John could use his. Jumping across revolving logs in an angry river gives one balance and steadiness, and he knew the slippery whale-back rocks that break the tangled bush in North Ontario. All the same, he got breathless and was glad to stop for a few moments. Miss Hall's look was strained, but he felt she trusted him, and he liked her pluck. Then he heard a shout and saw Alice and the others in the dale. Bob Wreay waved his hand.

"Hold on! Philip and I are coming up."

John looked at Ada. "Not much room for four on the ledge below. We ought to make it without them. What d'you say?"

Ada nodded and he was moved by her confidence.

"Don't bother!" he shouted. "You can't help much and we like to finish a job."

He crawled across a shelf, seized the girl strongly and lifted her down. A minute or two afterwards he stopped at the top of a long wet slab, and saw gently sloping grass twenty feet below.

"We'll toboggan this," he said.

He put his arm round Ada and sat down. The mossy slab was smooth and his boots got no hold. Next moment he struck the grass below, Ada fell against him, and he rolled for some distance down the slope. He did not know where Ada went until he stopped and saw Bob help her up. Her face was pink and her hair was loose. Although she laughed, her laugh was rather strained. They all laughed but Alice, who looked thoughtful.

"Why did you stop behind us, John?" she asked.

"I thought you knew we stopped. Anyhow, we could not keep up."

"Oh well," said Alice, "I expect Ada has spoiled her clothes, and there is a way to get round the slab. But, of course, you didn't see it! I don't think you often do see the easy way!"

John said nothing. He had found out that one did not argue with Alice. Bob's frank amusement did not bother him, but somehow Franklin's jarred.

VIII

JOHN SITS BY THE FIRE

RAIN beat against the windows, the evening was dark, and John loafed by the fire in the hall. He had set off after breakfast to fish a distant tarn and had not long returned. Although he caught nothing, he had got some satisfaction from scrambling across the wet rocks in the rain, and now he had changed his clothes, he was content to smoke and muse.

In Canada, one did not change one's clothes; they dried on one's body, and one did not stop to smoke before six o'clock. He heard the wind, and thought about other winds he knew; the boisterous North-Wester that rolls the thunder clouds across the skies of Saskatchewan; the soft Chinook, shaking the pines in Alberta passes; and the Arctic blast one met with lowered head and shrinking flesh on the lonely barrens. In England, so far as he knew England, one did not front destroying cold, and when one got rather wet took a hot bath and loafed by a fire. The plan had some advantages, but when John thought about it his mouth twisted humorously. For long, all the hot water he had used was a pint or two of melted snow in a battered kettle.

He looked up and saw Ada Hall cross the floor. She glanced at the table and then went to a shelf.

"At Ruthwaite you mustn't leave books about," John remarked. "Hugh Elliot's habit is to put things

away. Anyhow, your book's gone. Suppose you stop and talk to me?"

He fetched a chair, threw a log into the grate, and resumed: "I expect I ought to have rung the bell! Where are the others?"

"Alice and Bob are playing billiards. They were keen and I got bored."

"You don't play games?"

"I play the fiddle," said Ada with a smile. "It's a jealous and rather absorbing instrument. Don't you like billiards?"

"Pool's our game, but, now I think about it, I haven't played since I was at Toronto," John replied. "You see, in Canada, one has got to hustle."

He stopped and mused. At Ruthwaite nobody hustled, and he had made no plans. He meant to put things straight, and then, perhaps, go back to the woods, but he had not yet begun. He must, however, talk to Miss Hall.

"I reckon I'm like the ducks and cranes that come up from the South and stop at the prairie sloos. For a week or two they rest on the calm water and in the springing grass; and then you get up one morning and see they're gone. They've pulled out in the dark and pushed on for the North."

"We have birds of passage in England," Ada replied. "I am lucky to stop at Ruthwaite. Sometimes one must rest."

John studied her thoughtfully. Something of the tired look he had remarked when she arrived was gone, but her face was pinched and he got a hint of strain. He owned that she was not at all the girl he had thought, and rather fancied she knew. Miss Hall was

quiet, but she was keen. For all that, her glance was frank, and he thought her sincere.

"You imply you don't rest much?" he said.

Ada smiled. "I go about the manufacturing towns, wherever I can get an engagement; sometimes for a day or two, when I'm lucky, for a week. I think I know all the cheap lodgings in the North. If I stop playing my money goes. A second-class musician has no reserve fund."

"Do you think you ought to take Alice about?" John asked, with some hesitation, for he saw he was on awkward ground.

"You mean, I may go where Alice cannot?"

"I expect I did mean something like that," John admitted. "Your occupation teaches you much Alice does not know; you know where you can go safely. In fact, you see——"

Ada gave him an amused glance. "It's obvious, Mr. Wreay! To begin with, however, I do not take Alice about. She has once or twice insisted on joining me and her doing so was an embarrassment. All the same, I rather sympathize with Alice. Perhaps you can imagine Ruthwaite's getting dull? There's another thing; my friends are not numerous, and when Alice urged I could not refuse."

John nodded. The girl had pluck and did not grumble, but he imagined life for her was hard. Perhaps it was strange, but he trusted her, and to know he had refused to let Alice help her disturbed him.

"We'll let it go," he said. "Now you are at Ruthwaite, I hope you'll stay as long as possible."

"I cannot stay long. I must begin my studies with a good master very soon."

"Ah!" said John, "I forgot about that!"

Ada looked up, rather quickly. "Let's be frank, Mr. Wreay. I expect you and Alice's relations think me something of an adventuress. Perhaps I oughtn't to mind, but I do mind. You see, Alice is my friend: I don't want to exploit her, and I mean to repay the loan. Then she's firm, as well as generous. She was resolved I should use the money and forced me to consent. Well, since you did not refuse to indulge her, it looks as if you were kind——"

"I did refuse," John said quietly.

"But your refusal didn't carry much weight? I expect you found out that it's hard to baffle Alice."

John pondered. He saw Ada imagined he had let Alice persuade him, and to cheat her was shabby. Yet he began to think he must do so. She ought to get her chance to use her talent, but if she knew he had not agreed, she would not allow Alice to carry out the plan. Perhaps it was strange he knew this, but he did know. In the meantime, Ada waited and he doubted if he could strike the proper note.

To see Alice cross the floor was some relief. She stopped and began to talk, but after a few minutes Ada went off. John imagined Alice had meant her to go. When she had gone Alice turned to him.

"So you have got over your doubts about Ada, Jake?"

John smiled. When Alice meant to be nice she called him Jake. The hall was gloomy, but the reflections from the fire played about her and John felt her charm. He liked her fashionable dinner dress; he liked her rather puzzling smile.

"I reckon you gave me some chances to know Miss

Hall better. For example, when you left us behind on the hills——"

"You're really not dull, Jake," Alice remarked. "Well, I'm glad you are satisfied!"

"I'm not altogether satisfied yet. Where did you get the money you are going to lend Miss Hall?"

Alice's glance got hard, and John thought he saw why she had joined him.

"Your scrupulousness must be an awkward load. Does Ada know I did not get the money from you?"

"It looks as if you'd sooner she didn't know! Since you know I'm not always very bright, you ought to have put me wise."

Alice's eyes sparkled and the blood came to her skin. "If you have told Ada, you are not my friend! She will break her engagement with the master and go back to the music-halls. If she thought my trustee disapproved she would not take the loan."

"Anyhow, I did not tell Miss Hall," said John, and smiled his crooked smile.

"Then I was not just, and you're really rather nice," Alice remarked in a gentle voice.

"It's not important. Where *did* you get the money?"

"Ah!" said Alice, "now you're curious! Well, my friends are not all as scrupulous as you; but you carried out your duty and need not bother——"

She stopped, for Mrs. Franklin and Bob came in, and soon afterwards they went to dinner. After dinner a servant stated that a farmer had arrived and asked for John.

"Bell, of the Garth! Take him to the office," said

John and turned to Hugh. "I wanted to see him. Will you come?"

"I think not," Hugh replied. "Bell has given Dalton some trouble and goes at Martinmas. Perhaps you ought not to interfere."

"Anyhow, I'll talk to the fellow," said John, and, going off, stopped at the smoking-room, where Bob was alone.

"What do you know about Dalton, Hugh's lawyer?"

"I don't know much, but I think he's something of a fox."

"D'you mean he's a *crook?* Hugh trusts the man."

"I don't mean he's a crook, and if you know whether Hugh trusts him or not, you're cleverer than I thought. Hugh finds him useful. You see, as a rule a tenant farmer wants all he can get, and his landlord wants to give as little as he can. Dalton's, so to speak, the buffer; his job's to take the knocks. He states he fears he cannot persuade Mr. Elliot to spend the sum the farmer wants; Hugh declares he cannot agree until he knows Mr. Dalton's views. When they've kept it up for some time the farmer gets tired."

"And the barn the tenant wanted them to mend falls down."

"Oh, well!" said Bob, smiling, "the landlord has saved some interest and the next man may get along with a shed. You could not satisfy all your tenants if you gave them back their rents; but perhaps parsimony's as bad as extravagance. To use your example, when a barn falls down it's gone."

John looked at him rather hard. "I reckon Alice's estate is not run on extravagant lines."

"On the whole, I think not," Bob agreed. "Her

relations don't squander money on building and draining."

John went to the office in the tower. He knew Bob was shrewd and imagined he felt some frankness was indicated, but his frankness was not the frankness one used in Canada. When John went in a big, brown-skinned young man got up. John pulled out his cigar case.

"I'm glad you came over, Mr. Bell. Will you take a smoke?"

Bell looked surprised, but he lighted a cigar and remarked that the night was cold and wild.

"I expect you get worse," said John. "Now what's the trouble?"

The other began to tell him and John knitted his brows. The dalesfolk are cautious, and Bell did not mean to give an advantage to his antagonist. For all that, John thought him honest, and imagined his complaint was justified.

"I want to get this right," he said. "The landlord mends the buildings; the tenant mends the fences? Does Dalton claim you have let yours down?"

"He wouldn't could," Bell declared. "It's like this; byre was getting oad and haybarn's verra small. Mr. Dalton reckoned if I'd fence long meadow and river pasture with new posts, he'd meet builder's bill. Weel I thowt I'd mak' a job and I used larch and oak and four-point wire. Half a mile of stuff like that costs something."

"I begin to see," said John. "You put up a proper fence, but you haven't got your barn?"

"I've got notice to go at Martinmas. Fence is landlord's noo; I mustn't pull 't up."

"But what about the new tenant? Won't he want a barn?"

"I dinna ken," said Bell. "Mayhappen Mr. Dalton wants farm for a friend."

John gave him a keen glance and thought he knew something about the lawyer's plan. John's habit was not to hesitate; he trusted his judgment and went ahead.

"Very well! I reckon we ought to pay you for the fence; but do you want to go?"

The farmer's reply was cautious, but John imagined he would rather like to stay.

"You want a square deal? Suppose we let it stand for a week. When I have seen Dalton I'll come over to the Garth."

Bell thanked him and went, and John, going to the hall, found Hugh by the fire.

"Is Bell a good tenant?" he asked.

"He pays his rent. Are you resolved to meddle?"

"In a sense, my job's to meddle," John replied. "Anyhow, I'll talk to Dalton and then see how Bell runs his farm."

Hugh shrugged and said nothing. His look was inscrutable, but John imagined he was annoyed.

IX

JOHN SEES HIS LAWYER

ROBERT DALTON, head of the house of Dalton and Dalton, was not the man John had thought. His hair was going grey, but he was strongly built and his skin was brown. He wore fashionable, light-colored clothes, and looked like a sportsman rather than a lawyer. His office was spacious, the furniture was modern and two or three good prints of hunting scenes occupied the wall. When he gave John his hand he smiled and his manner was breezy.

"Mr. Elliot stated you were coming over, but I hardly expected you on a morning like this," he said. "When I was young, the river called, and I understand you're a fisherman. With a warm wind from the south-west, after a night's rain, the trout ought to rise."

"I'm Miss Elliot's trustee," said John. "I reckoned I wouldn't bother you until I got the hang of things, but now I've begun to do so——"

Dalton smiled indulgently. "Business first is a good motto, but if you have, in a few weeks, got a proper grasp of your duties, it says much for your concentration. In the North, the laws about land are complicated by old customs, lord's rents, and manor rights. In fact, after I had studied five years for my articles I was often puzzled."

"I have studied your balance sheets, and one thing's obvious; Miss Elliot's property is going down."

"For some time, all agricultural property has gone down," Dalton rejoined. "Heavy taxes, cost of labor, and the importation of food-stuff have something to do with it. The country landlord's interest is not allowed to weigh against the advantage of the manufacturing towns. However, we must try to satisfy you——"

He rang a bell, and when a young man brought in some books and documents, turned to John.

"My son, Frank, who will, I hope, carry on the house and be of use to you. Dalton's has transacted the Elliots' business for a hundred years."

John rather approved the young fellow, but after a few minutes Frank went out and an engine throbbed. Looking out from the open window, John saw a big car come to the steps and Frank get on board. The uniformed driver moved to another seat, Frank seized the wheel, and the long grey car rolled up the street. John had not thought a lawyer in a small market town would own an automobile like that. In the meantime, Dalton opened one of the books.

"Do you know the Lone Butte farm in Saskatchewan, Mr. Wreay?"

"Why, yes," said John, who noted that Dalton called it, properly, *Bute*. "The farm is famous. You see, the Bute's on the edge of the dry belt, and they spent a pretty large sum on irrigation ditches. The old-timers doubted, but I guess the company will make good. They grow a hard, milling wheat that ripens quicker than the standard Fyffe varieties. But I reckon you'll get tired——"

"Not at all," said Dalton, smiling. "I invested ten-thousand pounds—to some extent, my clients'

money—in the farm, and to know you don't think the venture rash is some satisfaction. However, you want to know about Miss Elliot's estate——"

He began to talk about farming rents and John pondered. Dalton's owning the big automobile and investing a good sum in Canada indicated that he was rich and important. John wondered whether he had wanted to indicate this. For example, his remarks about Lone Butte had nothing to do with John's business. Moreover, his dress, his look, and the furnishing of his office hinted at prosperity. Then John concentrated on the figures Dalton supplied, and for a time they studied accounts.

John admitted that the lawyer's arguments were sound, and he could not, for the most part, see how the estate could be better managed, but he was not satisfied. Alice had got poorer while Dalton got rich, and Bob declared the fellow was something of a fox. Dalton was not at all like a fox; his look and talk were frank, and he was rather more humorous than soberly business-like. Yet John imagined he carefully studied him.

"I think that's all," Dalton said at length. "You might, perhaps, talk to Mr. Franklin about the farm road."

"If I'm forced to take advice, I'll talk to Elliot. Franklin was kind, and I expect we owe him something, but he drops out now," John replied.

Dalton gave him a keen glance, but smiled and said, "One understands your feeling the duties are yours. Still perhaps some caution is useful."

"There's another thing," John resumed. "Bell, of the Garth, came over and I agreed, if he goes, we'd pay

for his fence. All the same, I'm going to the Garth, and if I think the farm's run properly, I'll try to fix it for him to stay."

"The fence cost a good sum, and I imagine Mr. Elliot is persuaded Bell ought to go."

"He indicated something like that. I reckon he weighed your arguments!"

"Mr. Elliot gives me his confidence, and perhaps my arguments ought to carry weight," Dalton replied. "After all, Mr. Wreay, you are not an English agricultural landlord."

"Until my uncle bought the estate, he was not a landlord, but in his control it paid. It has not paid much since."

Dalton pondered for a few moments, and then said quietly, "Your remark is justified, but in the last three or four years the value of all farm produce has gone down. In this country, one leaves much to one's agent, and when the agent knows his business the plan has advantages. It is possible your meddling is rash."

"I'm not going to meddle rashly," John rejoined. "When I've seen the farm and know Bell's proposition, I'll come around again."

He returned to Ruthwaite, and after lunch went to the garden and lighted his pipe. A warm wind blew up the dale and soft white clouds rolled across the sky. Across the grass, tall delphiniums and yellow lilies shone against a thick beech hedge. Bees hummed about the flowers, and one heard the river running in the shade. John watched the shadows trail across the hills and felt the landscape's brooding calm. Yet he had begun to think the calm that marked Ruthwaite

was not altogether real. In the distance, so to speak, one sensed a threat of storm.

He did not want the house; his proper home was a shack in the wilds, but had he got the land, he thought he might have stopped and labored to develop the estate. After all, if he were left alone, he could do much; the trouble was, the others would not leave him alone, and his power was limited. But suppose he married Alice and in her right were master?

John shook his head and smiled. Alice's charm was strong; her beauty moved him and she had qualities he liked, but he was not her sort. Then, in a sense, she was his antagonist. Alice stood for the extravagant traditions and proud carelessness that had brought her relations near to poverty, and might impoverish Ruthwaite unless he were firm. John, however, meant to be firm. His uncle had trusted him, although he knew the Elliots and all his nephew would be up against. The grim old boiler-maker had loved Alice, and for her sake had given John an awkward job. John saw he must put it over, although Hugh and Alice herself might try to hinder him.

After a time Bob came along the path and stopped by the bench.

"You went to see Dalton!" he remarked.

"I did," said John. "He's not much like a fox. Anyhow, I don't see him robbing my chicken roost."

"To give you a hint is rash; you don't know where to stop. I did not imply Dalton would rob you."

"In England you're a cautious lot and hesitate to get on a move. However, I went to see Dalton about the Garth. I don't want to put Bell off the farm."

"I expect you know Hugh won't like your keeping the fellow on, and Alice will support her grandfather?"

John looked up and his glance was keen. "Do you think Dalton has got a pull on Hugh?"

"Well," said Bob in a thoughtful voice, "I have wondered—but that's all. Do you know much about the old English ballads?"

"When I was at Toronto we used to sing, *My Bonny.*"

"I imagine that's modern. I can't state that *John o' Scales* is really old, but it's in the old style and tells an instructive tale."

"You make me tired!" John exclaimed and added: "Alice is coming."

Bob laughed. "Then, I'll get off. I expect she wants to see you, and she looks resolute."

He went and Alice advanced. Her color was rather high, and although she was calm John thought her calm was forced.

"You went to Dalton's this morning, John. Did you talk about Bell?"

"We did," said John. "I don't particularly want to talk about Bell now."

"I imagined something like that!" Alice remarked. "You would sooner not talk to me, although you talked about him to Bob. Do you mean to let the obstinate fellow keep the farm?"

"Perhaps he is obstinate, but he didn't get a square deal. If he's a good farmer, I reckon he ought to stay."

"I do not," said Alice haughtily, but she used some control and resumed in a gentler voice: "There's another thing; grandfather is getting old, and when

people baffle him it hurts. He's persuaded Bell ought to go, and to indulge him would not be hard. Then if you don't agree another time, and the thing's important, you can be firm."

"The trouble is, I don't know if Hugh *or Dalton* is persuaded Bell ought to go, and I've not much grounds to indulge the lawyer. Besides, if Bell is the man I think, to put him off the farm is not good business."

"I suppose Bob agrees? He's a Wreay and of course supports you!"

"The argument is mine," said John, and frowned. "This fool jealousy about Elliots and Wreays makes me tired. If it's going to bother us, confound both families!"

"I don't mind your getting angry, John," Alice remarked with a twinkle. "Do you read Shakespeare? *Romeo and Juliet* for example?"

"His works are known in Canada," John replied. "All the same, I don't see where you lead and there's something I want to know. Who was *John o' Scales?*"

Alice looked at him hard, and frowned. She was obviously startled, but John thought she pondered, as if she tried to weigh the importance of his remark.

"Ah!" she said, "I expect you got that from Bob! But since you don't know the story, we'll talk about Bell. You don't know us yet; I doubt if you can picture how grandfather feels your rude challenge of his rule. Then, you really don't know much about managing an English estate."

"That is so," John admitted. "Anyhow, my notion is, I'm challenging the lawyer's rule, and Bell's claim is plain. The proposition stands like this: we agreed to fix his farmstead if he put up the fence. Well, he

did put up the fence, but we have not put up the barn."

Alice's eyes sparkled and her face got red. "You're horribly logical, but the dispute is not as plain as it looks. Besides, the farm is mine!"

"In two or three years you'll get rid of my control and me," John said, smiling. "If you marry somebody I approve, you'll get rid of me before. In the meantime, I've got to carry out John Wreay's will."

"The will is ridiculous," Alice declared, and got up. "All the Wreays are ridiculous! You're a dull and horribly obstinate lot!"

She went off, and John moodily lighted his pipe. He agreed that Water-tube John was ridiculous when he made the will, for his jars with Alice hurt. Although she was perhaps not altogether just, she was generous. She did not think about her tenant; she thought about her grandfather and wanted to save his pride. Well, there was no use in bothering; when one saw one's way, one went forward.

A few minutes afterwards Alice met Hugh on the terrace. Hugh's eyes were keen, and he noted that she held her head high and her mouth was hard.

"Did you not go to look for John?" he asked.

"I have come back. You frankly cannot argue with John. He cannot weigh an argument; he's woodenly immovable."

"But what did you argue about?"

"I didn't mean you to know until I had persuaded John. However, I expect you really do know."

Hugh smiled. He saw Alice was hurt, to some extent on his account, but to some extent because John was obstinate. John was perhaps the first man whom

she could not command, and no doubt his firmness jarred.

"Your object was kind, but I think you ought not to have bothered John. After all, he has some grounds to imagine Bell——"

"His grounds are ridiculous, and I didn't imagine you would defend him," Alice rejoined.

"Perhaps I like to rule, but when one gets old one gets philosophical," Hugh said gently. "Then I begin to feel your affairs need a younger and firmer hand than mine and I must be satisfied to look on."

Alice gave him a keen glance. That Hugh was resigned to giving up control was strange, and a remark of Bob's that John had repeated disturbed her. Suppose Dalton really was like John o' Scales? But she would not think about it now.

"John's firmness is hateful and nobody is very nice to me," she said, and went to the house.

In the meantime, John got the small car and started for the market town. He went to the public library and the librarian gave him a book in which he found the ballad of John o' Scales. John, studying the rhyme about the ambitious steward, saw a light and frowned. If Bob had not exaggerated, and his analogy were good, John did not know where he would get the gold to save the pawned estate. At the garage he wrote a note to his bank manager, and then started for Ruthwaite in a thoughtful mood.

X

ON BUZZARD CRAG

SUNSHINE and speeding shadow touched the lofty crag; a keen wind tore the mist and tossed the shreds about. Ada Hall sat in the heather and got her breath; John leaned against a fallen mass and studied the great rock. In places, smooth wet slabs shone like polished steel and faded; in other places the surface was rough and dotted by tufts of heath. A few yards off, a dark gully split the crag. Its inner end was broken, and John thought he could get up, but he did not know about Miss Hall. In Canada, he had pushed across the Laurentian rocks in order to reach his prospecting grounds; in England, he found climbing was a sport and something of an art. People cultivated the proper use of hands and back and particularly of one's feet.

At the bottom of the gully, Philip Franklin knotted a rope and three or four others stood about, for Alice had got up a party to climb Buzzard Crag. John had not seen as finely spun a rope before, but he had lashed on pack-horses' loads and knew the knots were good. In fact, he admitted that Franklin knew his job.

"I'll lead on the first rope," Philip remarked. "We'll tie Miss Hall on next and Alice will go last. Bob and Miss Mowbray will use the other rope, and perhaps they had better give John the middle."

John thought Ada was not keen but hesitated to

refuse. Besides, he did not like Philip's hint that he ought to go between a young girl and Bob.

"Miss Hall is not a mountaineer and the stones are wet," he said. "I expect she'd sooner loaf about until you come down."

"The ghyll is a beginner's climb, and I'll engage to pull Miss Hall up," Franklin replied, and turned to Alice with a smile. "John thinks the stones are wet!"

John was annoyed. Franklin's amusement jarred, and he imagined Alice would support the fellow and urge Ada to try. Since the dispute about Bell's farm, Alice had left John alone.

"John is generally cautious, but if he doesn't want to go, you won't move him," she remarked.

"The stones are wet, and Miss Hall has not proper boots," said Bob. "Then you'd have to lift her at the chock-stone, and the hold's not very good."

"I expected you would back out, John," Alice rejoined. "However, if Ada would sooner stop with him, they can go down by the tarn and meet us at the inn."

Ada looked up rather sharply, but John touched her and she said nothing. The others put on the rope and in a few minutes vanished among the stones in the gully.

"After all, it doesn't look very hard," Ada remarked.

"I don't think it is hard, with a rope," John agreed. "When the leader hits an awkward spot the next man can push him up, and when he gets over the obstacle he steadies the others. If one twists the rope round something, nobody can fall."

"Then, why didn't you let me go?"

"For one thing, you didn't look very keen. Then I

hate to be bluffed and Franklin got me riled. He's so —polite."

"Don't you like politeness?" Ada asked with a twinkle, because she knew what John's pause implied.

"I don't like Franklin's politeness. If he used it on a lumber gang, somebody would use a handspike. Well, I reckon they won't make the inn for two or three hours. What are we going to do?"

"The sun's nice," said Ada. "To begin with, I will rest and you can smoke."

John lighted his pipe and Ada mused. She liked John, and had noted his firmness and thought for her. Although she imagined he knew he could get up the gully and Franklin's sneer annoyed him, he had not gone. Ada thought he began to feel the subtle antagonism she had noted soon after she arrived at Ruthwaite. Franklin's habit was to sneer at John, and he used a cleverness that made his victim look ridiculous when he was not. The others laughed and did not see the malice behind the joke. Although John was not at all a fool, sometimes he was dull.

To account for Franklin's antagonism was hard. Nothing indicated that he was Alice's lover, and Ada was persuaded Alice did not want him for a lover. It looked as if she did not want John; they disputed, and when Alice was baffled she got angry. Yet Ada imagined Franklin hated John.

For a time she watched the mist roll about and the sunbeams light the rocks. Blue hills came out of the vapor and vanished. In a deep hollow, a pale rainbow marked a shower. On the stones at her feet moss and lichen shone green and gold; a little stream streaked a high black slab with silver threads of foam. All the

same, Ada's enjoyment of the landscape's beauty was disturbed. Alice had implied that she had wanted to stay with John! Ada was staunch, and Alice was her friend, but Alice had faults and sometimes indulged her wayward temper. Just now John's dullness was perhaps not a drawback. Still Ada did not want the others to think Alice's remark was justified, and, for John's sake, she was angry with Franklin.

"Could we get up the crag by an easy line?" she asked.

"A tourist path goes round the back of the hill, but it's some distance off."

"I don't want to *walk* up," Ada rejoined.

John gave her a keen glance and began to smile. "Well, I found a book about the mountains in the library, and it gives a way up. Suppose we go along and look at the track?"

They set off, and turning a corner, presently stopped at another front of the crag. The rock was broken and narrow ledges and long dark slabs went up steeply, but so far as John could see, the hold for hands and feet was good.

"Well," he said, "do you want to try it?"

"I don't want Franklin to sneer at us," Ada replied. "If we can't get up, I suppose we can come back."

"You're a sport," said John. "We are going to get up."

For a few yards they followed an inclined shelf and then John gave Ada his hand. "Put your foot in the crack and seize the top."

He steadied her, she reached the top of the slab, and for some distance the broken ledges helped them up. John's balance was good and instinctively he stood

back from the rock and trusted his feet. Ada leaned forward and where it was possible clutched the broken stone, but she made progress until they stopped to get breath. One could not see the bottom of the crag; the top of the pitch below cut the green hillside across the dale. Yet one felt the gap and got an illusion of profound depth. Ada looked about and her eyes sparkled.

"Now I know why people think mountaineering a sport," she said. "On the rocks one feels like an eagle. But I suppose this is really a beginner's climb?"

"I've packed a prospector's outfit up as steep a track," said John.

Ada laughed. "You're not romantic and don't see when you ought to play up. I wanted to feel my getting here was something of an exploit."

"Oh, well," John replied, "I don't know that I'd engage to pack a load to the top, and the book stated something about a *traverse*. When we reach it you may get a thrill."

Ten minutes afterwards they stopped at the bottom of a nearly perpendicular buttress and John studied the rocks. They could not get up the buttress, but on one side was a wide slab, across which ran a deep horizontal crack. The edge of the crack was chipped, as if by nailed boots. At the other end a bulging rock closed his view. He saw he had reached the traverse and remembered that the book stated the bulge was the last awkward spot and gave instructions for surmounting the obstacle.

"There's our road, and I reckon it looks worse than it is," he remarked. "So long as you keep the rock

close, you can't fall off, but if you like, we'll go back."

He thought Ada shrank, but she said, "I'm not going back."

"Your pluck's good," said John, and getting his boot in the crack went cautiously forward.

Then he waited for Ada, and when she joined him went on again. Sometimes he put his arm round her while she felt for a fresh hold, and sometimes he steadied her by a firm grasp at an awkward stretch. He saw she trusted him and moved as he told her, almost unconsciously, but to know she could not look down was some relief. The hold was good, and so long as one was steady one did not run much risk. All the same, John was bothered about the bulge at the corner.

By and by he reached the corner and braced himself against the rock. Just above his head the slab stopped and a ledge stuck out. A scratched knob and a small hole indicated how other climbers had reached the top. With some help, the thing was easy and John turned to Ada.

"Stop for a few moments and get your breath. Then you must put your foot in the hole, reach for the knob and stand on my shoulder. I expect it's as easy as going upstairs."

Ada doubted, but she did not want to stop and look about. John heard her boot scratch the rock and then felt her weight upon his stiffened arm, stretched horizontally to the rock. The nails bit through his thin jacket, but he did not move. Her foot touched his shoulder and then the weight was gone. He heard a gasp, and knew she had reached the top.

"Have you made it all right?" he asked.

"Oh, yes; I'm on a good, wide ledge," she said, and added: "How will you get up?"

John did not altogether know. He imagined other climbers used a rope. The knob that had helped Ada was some distance from the top and he saw he must risk something when he took his foot from the hole. Throwing up his arm and straightening his bent knee, he seized the ledge; his boots scraped the stone and then the nails took hold. He got both hands on the ledge and his knee against the slab. Then he lifted himself with bent arms and rolled on to the ledge. When he got up he saw his clothes were torn and his scraped knee came through the cloth. He touched the back of his smarting neck and put his hand behind him, for his fingers were stained by blood. Yet he had not felt Ada's boot touch his neck. Her face was flushed, but her eyes were very bright.

"We have made the traverse and the rest looks easy," she said in a triumphant voice.

"I think you need a rest and I'd like a smoke," said John.

He lighted a cigarette and resumed: "You're a sport. Alice declares I'm horribly logical, but it doesn't look like that. Although I wouldn't let Franklin take you up the ghyll, on a rope, I took you along the traverse."

"I didn't want to go with Franklin——" Ada said, and stopped.

John nodded. "Sometimes I'm not very dull. You saw I was obstinate and he had riled me? It was obvious the fellow knew his job, but you were kind and played up."

"After all, I don't like Franklin much," said Ada smiling. "Then don't you see you're rather important? You are Alice's guardian and I need her help."

"No," said John, "I don't think that accounts for it. Besides, Alice states I'm her *trustee*. My job's to keep her purse, but it stops there."

"Your argument's not sound. Your keeping the purse might account for much, and when you indulged Alice not long since perhaps you were rash."

John colored. Although he hated to cheat Ada, he durst not state he had refused Alice's demand. He liked the girl's independence. She had no rich friends but Alice; all she had was her talent and her pluck. He must not rob her of her chance to make good.

"I guess you know the line you take's ridiculous," he said. "Anyhow, I'm glad Alice gave you a fighting chance, because I feel you're going to make your mark."

"I wonder——" said Ada thoughtfully, and got up. "Well, perhaps we ought to go on."

The climb to the top was not hard, and when they went up the last pitch Bob, looking down across the rocks, shouted and waved his cap. A few minutes afterwards John helped Ada on to a level bank of stones, and Alice gave him a rather keen glance.

"How did you get up?" she asked.

"We went for the buttress and then by the traverse."

"But you had not a rope and didn't know the line!"

John smiled. "When you see the rocks all scratched by nails, it looks as if somebody had used the line before."

"Oh, well," said Alice. "I don't know how you got Ada across the corner bulge, but since you did so and she hesitated at the ghyll, I'm frankly puzzled."

"We are all puzzled," Franklin remarked. "In fact, I can't account for John's modesty. He declared he doubted if the ghyll was safe."

"John's a Wreay and the Wreays don't argue like other people," Alice replied.

"The rocks at the traverse were dry, but the ghyll was wet. That accounts for something," said John.

"We know your obstinacy," Alice rejoined with a laugh. "But the wind is cold; we'll start for the inn."

XI

BOB HITS A STONE

THE old white inn occupied a narrow level between the mountain and the river. At one end, ragged firs threw moving shadows on the stone-slab roof, a low wall, dotted by tiny ferns, ran along the waterside, and an ancient yew stretched dark branches across the stream. Beyond the boggy pasture on the other side, steep rocky slopes went up into the mist that rolled about the heights, but the sun touched the bottom of the dale with warm yellow light.

John stopped for a moment or two in the porch. Shining threads of foam streaked the crags, a fall throbbed, and the splash of running water echoed about the inn, but John thought Franklin's big car and Bob's motor-bicycle struck a foreign note. A low window near the porch was open, and he heard a girl's careless voice and Bob's laugh. Tea was over and John must talk to Franklin before the party set off. When he saw Franklin smoking a cigarette under the yew he crossed the grass.

"Not long since you lent Alice two hundred pounds," he said.

"Did Alice inform you about the loan?"

"She did not. In a sense, that's important, because I don't imagine she informed Hugh. However, when I went to the bank——"

"Ah," said Franklin coolly, "I expect Alice was careless, but you are keener than we thought."

John frowned and was quiet for a few moments; he was on awkward ground and Franklin was clever. Then he said, "I'm going to write you a check."

"On Alice's account?"

"On mine."

Franklin smiled. "You can, of course, write the check, but you cannot force me to use it."

"You must use the check."

"Why,"

"I think it's obvious. A girl ought not to borrow from her male friends."

"You have lived in the woods, John, and it looks as if you did not study the newspapers," Franklin remarked in a careless voice. "Modern young women are extravagant and some are willing to borrow from whom they can."

John's face got red. "You know Alice is not their sort."

"Of course! Still, if Alice ought not to borrow from me, I don't see much to justify her borrowing from you."

"For one thing, I'm her trustee."

"You're not very logical," Franklin rejoined. "When Alice wanted to use her money you refused, and since you obviously approve Miss Hall, your refusal's puzzling. You did not offer to lend Alice the sum she wanted, but now, when you have let your chance of indulging her go, you are keen to give it me."

John said nothing. He was not going to talk about Alice's adventure at the music-hall. Besides, he did approve Miss Hall. She had moved him to sympathy

and admiration; in fact, he could imagine his falling in love with a girl like that. She was his sort. All the same, he was not her lover.

"I don't want your check," Franklin resumed. "To know I helped Alice out, when her proper guardians would not, gives me some satisfaction, and by and by she will pay me back. Suppose we let it go?"

"We cannot let it go," John said firmly.

His blood got hot, for Franklin's remarks had jarred, and since the fellow was cultivated John thought he had consciously taken an improper line. He implied that Alice was willing to use him for an accomplice in a plot to cheat John and Hugh. To throw Franklin into the river would have soothed John, but in England one did not use the rules of the lumber gang.

"Then, what are you going to do about it?" Franklin inquired with malicious amusement. "Will you try to persuade Alice she ought not to have borrowed from me?"

"I reckon not," said John, who did not see himself venturing on ground like that.

"Very well! Suppose you tell Hugh Elliot? Hugh, of course would be annoyed, and I imagine his annoyance would take an active form. Miss Hall would, no doubt, share it with me, and would find out where Alice got the two hundred pounds. Perhaps you can see her plan?"

John saw. Ada would break her engagement with her teachers and return to the music-halls. In fact, John saw he was beaten and came near to hating Franklin, who studied him with a smile. Then they heard voices, and Alice and two or three others crossed the grass.

"You look very sober," she remarked. "Were you disputing?"

"On the whole, I think we agreed," said Franklin carelessly. "John's object was good, but he was not remarkably practical. However, if you are ready, I'll start the engine.

"Let me start my bicycle first," said Bob, and signed John.

They went to the gate, and Bob wheeled out his bicycle.

"When she gets warm she'll go, but sometimes she's sulky about getting off. I expect we'll have to run and help her along."

They ran for a few yards and then the engine fired and Bob jumped up. The explosions, however, were slack and he shouted: "She's not pulling yet. Use both hands and shove!"

John shoved. The sun was hot, the bicycle was heavy, and the hill was steep. He lost his breath and his face got red, but since Bob was resolved to start the thing he must help. By and by the explosions got sharp, the bicycle leaped forward, and John staggered and let go. For a second or two he stopped, and then ran savagely up the hill. Seizing Bob's belt, he jumped. The belt stretched, the bicycle swerved and took the grass, but John was on the carrier. Bob got back into the road and the jolting machine vanished across the top of the hill. A cloud of dust rolled up, and the others, standing about the big car, laughed.

"Bob is frankly ridiculous, but I thought John sober," Alice remarked. "I expect that's why his running after the bicycle was amusing."

" John's an unconscious humorist," Franklin said dryly.

"Perhaps it's important he caught the bicycle," said Ada Hall.

"John is like that," Alice agreed. "Sometimes one gets angry and sometimes one laughs, but John goes ahead." She turned to Franklin. "I think he generally gets there. But we are ready and your engine does start."

They got on board. Franklin turned the wheel, the big car swung into the road and rolled smoothly up the hill. At the top they saw, far down the dale, a moving trail of dust.

"Bob is driving hard," somebody said.

"I expect his cranky bicycle will not go unless she goes all out," Franklin replied. "He ought to scrap the old machine, but Bob is marked by something of his relations' frugality."

Alice, sitting behind him, leaned forward. "Bob is not rich, and his relations are mine."

"Oh, well!" said Franklin. "I'd sooner not argue about it. The road is narrow."

"It looks as if your argument with John had satisfied you. I expect you had enough," Alice rejoined.

Franklin occupied himself with the wheel, and Ada, noting Alice's color, smiled. Alice disputed with John and sometimes grumbled about his parsimony, but she would not allow another to do so. Then the throb of the engine quickened, the car swung round a curve and Ada studied the landscape. Boggy pastures, larch-woods, silver birches, and white farmsteads rolled by. In places, the road ran by the waterside; in places it

went up to the fern that bordered the screes on the hill. The color on the long slopes changed and melted as the shadows trailed across stones and grass, but the hills got lower and one felt the keen wind from the sea.

At the top of a steep incline Franklin leaned forward; the car jarred and began to stop. In front, a flock of sheep was scattered about, and a motor-bicycle occupied the side of the road. Bob and a shepherd disputed noisily, and John sat in the grass. His hat was gone, his clothes were smeared by dust, and he held a handkerchief to his head. Before the car had altogether stopped Alice jumped down and ran across the road.

"Are you hurt, Jake?" she asked.

John looked up, but did not move the handkerchief. "I've had worse knocks. Bob hit a stone and I came off. Then I think he hit a sheep. Did he kill the animal?"

"We won't bother about the sheep. Let me help you to the car," said Alice, and signed Franklin. "Bob will take your man. John must come with us."

"Not at all," said John, who got up and twisted the handkerchief round his head. "Bob engaged to take me home and must finish the job. You're kind, but I'm quite all right."

He went to the bicycle and Bob resumed his argument with the shepherd. Alice returned to the car and when she got up Franklin gave her a meaning glance and shrugged. Alice's eyes sparkled, but she said nothing and Franklin pulled out his watch. After a time, the shepherd leisurely drove his flock to a gate, Bob started the bicycle and John got up. They

vanished round a corner and Franklin put back his watch.

"Perhaps John was lucky; not long since Bob hit a wall," he said. "Now his eloquence is exhausted, we'll get on."

The road went across rolling ground between the mountains and the sea and sometimes they saw the bicycle. When Franklin stopped at Ruthwaite, the bicycle was at the door, and Alice got down first and went into the hall. For a moment she thought nobody was about, and then she saw John sitting by an oak screen. His face was rather white and his eyes were dull. He had taken off the handkerchief and Alice saw his head was cut. When she advanced he braced himself.

"You mustn't get up! Wait a moment," she said, and vanished.

John smiled and waited. Alice was strangely swift, but cool. He had got a worse knock than he had at first thought and the jolting on the carrier had shaken him. In fact, he rather doubted if he could get up. In a few moments Alice came back with some wine.

"Drink it all," she said, and when he drained the glass, put a cushion in the corner of the screen. "Now lean back, rest your head and don't talk."

John did not much want to talk. He noted that Alice did not inquire about Bob; she thought he needed wine and had, herself, got some. Her glance was gentle, but somehow she was firm. In fact, John admitted he did not know Alice yet, but in the meantime he was satisfied to indulge her. Then she turned and saw Franklin in the hall.

"Can I do something?" he asked.

"You can send Ada in the other way and then drive Helen Mowbray home. I think that's all."

Franklin went off, and soon afterwards Bob came in. He put down a tray and lifted off a basin of hot water.

"I expected to finish the job before you arrived, but since I did not, you can help," he said to Alice. "Hold the basin."

He washed the cut, shook a few drops from a bottle on a small wet pad and gave Alice a strip of linen.

"Put it over the pad, round his head, and tie at the back. Now hold the end of the other piece!"

Alice's touch was light and soothing; the bandage was firm and the knots did not hurt. Bob, of course, knew how to fix a bandage, but Alice had helped. He had sent off the servants and she had sent off Franklin. As a rule, Alice was careless and Bob liked to joke, but when some strain must be borne they were resolute and calm.

"I'll come back in a few moments," Bob remarked, picking up the tray.

"Where's he gone?" John inquired, and felt in his pocket. "I want a cigarette; my pipe's smashed."

Alice laughed. "Sometimes Bob uses tact. I'll get you a cigarette."

"Not at all," said John. "I'm not going to let you run about for me, although you're very kind."

"Kinder than you thought?" Alice remarked and crossed the floor to get a cigarette.

John's head ached, but when she came back he smiled. "I reckon I knew your kindness, but so far my luck has not been very good. Perhaps I'm not the proper man for the job I've got."

"Sometimes you are obstinate, Jake, and it's possible

we will jar again, but I don't know if I'd altogether like a fresh trustee. Anyhow, when you are hurt——"

"I'm not really hurt," John declared, and got up. Then he stopped and seized the screen. Alice put her hand on his arm and gently forced him back.

"You are obstinate and I doubt if you're polite. However, you must wait for Bob."

John was quiet and waited until Bob came in and helped him to his room.

XII

JOHN SEES A PLAN

IN the morning John's head and leg hurt, but loafing got monotonous and after lunch he went quietly up the dale. Dark clouds floated about the hills, the afternoon was calm and hot, and John sat down at the edge of a wood. By and by heavy drops splashed on the wet road and he frowned. It looked as if a shower were coming, but he did not want to move and could not go fast.

He heard steps and a man came round a corner and, stopping on the grass, took off his hat and used it for a fan. His hair was going white, but he was strongly built and his glance was alert. John knew he was Markham, Hugh's antagonist.

"When it's going to rain the flies bother one," he said, and added with a twinkle: "You are Mr. Wreay. Since we are neighbors, perhaps it's strange we have not met before."

John smiled. He thought he liked Markham.

"Now we have met, I want to thank you for sending back my hat. The joke was pretty good, you put the laugh on me!"

"I doubt if all your relations would see the joke," Markham rejoined. "But have you hurt your head?"

"When Bob Wreay was bringing me home on the carrier, we hit a flock of sheep and I came off. Perhaps you know Bob?"

"Sometimes we talk. I imagine Mr. Wreay's not altogether satisfied about his knowing me——"

He stopped. Heavy rain beat the trees and splashed upon the wall across the road. The light got dim and a wind sprang up and tossed the branches.

"You are some distance from Ruthwaite, but Scarfoot is not far," Markham resumed. "A sheltered path goes through the wood. Will you come back with me?"

John agreed, and they went through a gate. To get wet would not bother him, but he was sore and did not want to walk fast and change his clothes. When they reached the house Markham presented him to his wife and daughter, and John thought Miss Markham an attractive girl, but soon afterwards they went to the smoking-room. Markham gave him a cool drink, and John was satisfied to rest in an easy chair.

For a time his host talked about farming, and John weighed his remarks. The old fellow was shrewd and although he had been an iron-founder it was plain he knew much about managing a small estate.

"It looks as if you had spent a pretty good sum, Mr. Markham, but you are a business man," John said presently. "Do you expect to get your money back?"

"Perhaps I run a risk. In our bleak hills, farming means a struggle, and one must not reckon on a large reward. All the same, I rather think my investments sound. Are you making progress at Ruthwaite?"

"I have not gone far yet," John replied. "To put things straight implies spending money I cannot get. In the meantime, I'm patching up and making small improvements that are economically possible."

"Have you thought about developing the mine? A

copper vein's a valuable property, and I understand the ore carries other useful metals."

"The mine pays wages, but that's all. We use the wet process and reduction costs us much. Electrolysis would give us high-grade copper, and since we would get cheap power from the creek I've speculated about putting up turbines and dynamos; but the plant's expensive."

"Electrolytic copper's pure copper," Markham agreed. "All other metals are left in the bath, and you might find a plan to separate them cheaply. Are you a chemist?"

"I'm a prospector," said John. "An up-to-date prospector knows something about chemistry, but I don't know much."

"Have you talked to Franklin about the ore? He has a good laboratory."

John looked up with surprise. He had not known Philip was a chemist.

"Franklin advised Hugh Elliot, but since I arrived he has left the business of the estate alone."

"I imagine Franklin uses tact," said Markham dryly. "Although he's an amateur, he's a first-class chemist, and when he came over not long since and we talked about some new alloys for steel his remarks were illuminating. Well, if you do resolve to experiment at the mine, I might perhaps help. Iron is my metal, but an old foundry-man knows something about machines."

By and by the rain stopped and John started for Ruthwaite in a thoughtful mood. Alice's fortune had melted since his uncle died, and the steady shrinking of rents and shares bothered John. If the mine paid, money he needed to improve the farms might be got,

and the ore carried some silver and other metals that were now lost. John imagined the metals were refined in America, bu the process was expensive and he could not see his way to experiment.

When he got to Ruthwaite, Hugh met him on the terrace, and John thought he looked disturbed.

"Nobody knew where you had gone and I was forced to act without consulting you," he said. "Soon after lunch a telegram arrived from Philip, who went up to town last night, and he advised me to sell Alice's cement-works shares. I wired my stock-broker and have got his reply; my order arrived shortly before the market closed, but others were offering the shares and nobody would buy. In the morning he will telegraph again."

"It looks as if Philip's advice was good," John remarked. "We own a number of shares."

"The company has paid good dividends," said Hugh. "Dalton rather urged my buying the shares; I understood he knew the directors"—— He paused and resumed with a thoughtful look: "The strange thing is, he didn't know about the slump, although Philip knew."

"Philip's in town. Perhaps they have got a tape machine at his club. Then he may have heard some rumors in the smoking-room.

"He is not a keen speculator, and Dalton rather boasts about his friends on the stock exchange."

"Oh, well," said John, "Dalton obviously doesn't know, and we must wait for the morning."

He went off and met Alice in the hall.

"Where did you go when it rained?" she asked.

"I met Markham, who took me to Scarfoot."

"You stayed for some time," said Alice. "Violet Markham's rather pretty?"

"I thought her attractive. All the same, when I'd made my bow Markham took me to the smoking-room."

"Did you tell grandfather where you had gone?"

"Hugh did not inquire. He's bothered about another thing."

"The cement shares? Do I own a large number?"

"You own a larger block than I'd like you to lose," John said soberly.

Alice gave him a thoughtful glance and noted the lines on his forehead and the tightness of his mouth.

"You are really a good sort, Jake. Although you have got an awkward job, you don't grumble; you try to carry out the job. Grandfather cannot help you much and I have not helped at all. I'm careless and perhaps selfish; sometimes I know I'm shabby."

She went off and John's heart beat faster. Alice had not talked like this before and he felt rewarded for the effort he had used.

In the morning a note from Franklin arrived. He stated he was returning from town and would come over. The stockbroker sent a copy of the telegrams and said disturbing rumors about the cement company had reached the exchange, but if he got trustworthy news he would telegraph. When a boy brought the message Hugh and John were on the terrace. Hugh opened the envelope and his look got very grave.

"No buyers. Reported creditors petitioning bankruptcy. If confirmed will wire."

"Confirmation's not important. We will get no

dividends and cannot sell the stock," John remarked grimly.

For a few moments Hugh was silent and John thought he looked very old. Then he said, in a quiet voice, "The Swinset Elliots are careless about the money, and for two or three generations let our estate go down. I had meant to guard Alice's, but it's obvious I'm an unprofitable steward. Well, we will talk about it when Philip comes."

Philip arrived in the evening, and they went to the office in the tower. Bob joined them, and since he inherited something they let him remain. Hugh gave Franklin the stockbroker's letters and telegrams.

"I got a hint at my club, but the thing is worse than I thought," Franklin remarked. "The company has paid dividends it did not earn until somebody found out, and I expect the creditors will file a bankruptcy petition in order to save as much as possible. I understand the works and plant are good, and you may get part of the sum the shares stand for. There are no grounds to hope you will get much."

"The dividends helped us to carry on," said Hugh. "Now they have stopped, I don't altogether see—— Well, I admit I have got a very nasty knock."

Franklin nodded. "It is awkward. You might sell some land, but prices for hill farms are low, and I think John Wreay stipulated something about your not breaking up the property. You could, however, rent the shooting; the moors ought to carry a larger head of grouse, and you could stock the woods with hand-reared pheasants. Then the Croft house would command a good rent for a shooting lodge."

He indicated a plan for modernizing the house, but

John said nothing and looked about. His uncle had used the room; its austerity and the plain solid furniture harmonized with the boiler-maker's temperament. Water-tube John had mended the house's fortunes; Hugh had let all go. Yet John was sorry for Hugh, because it was obvious he felt himself accountable. John held Franklin accountable and was conscious of keen antagonism. The fellow's exaggerated cultivation jarred; he had guided Hugh, and although he was clever, had helped to pull down much that Water-tube John had built.

"The economies I indicate are useful, but will not carry us far," said Franklin. "We must try to find another plan, and although the mine has not paid, it might help us now. The process we use is old-fashioned and our plant is getting out of date. We have been satisfied with the copper——"

John stopped him. He had thought much about the mine and now saw a light.

"When you refine copper by electrolysis, all other metals are left in the solution, and if they're valuable it pays to work up stuff we throw away. Something like that is done in the United States, and we want to find out the methods the big companies use. I guess the job's mine. I'm going to find out."

Franklin pondered. He was a chemist and knew something about copper refining. John did not, but if he were resolved to go, Franklin approved. In fact, he rather thought his luck was good.

"I would sooner you stayed, but I must not urge you," Hugh remarked. "Then perhaps you will not be very long——"

"John may find out something useful; I think you

ought to let him go," said Philip, and turned to John. "When do you start?"

"I pull out to-night for London. An American mining engineer I know was in town not long since, and if I can find him he'll put me on the proper track. Then I'll buy a ticket for the first fast boat. Get me the newspaper with the steamship advertisements, Bob."

Bob went off and Franklin smiled. "You're keen! All the same, you ought to weigh things, and perhaps before you start let us see what we can find out from the English refiners. We have large copper works in this country."

Somehow John imagined Franklin was not sincere; he thought Philip rather wanted him to go, but this was not important.

"The English refiners would not let me study their furnaces and machines; I doubt if they would frankly put us wise. Then I'm not going to study copper refining, but to see how they separate the metals we lose. My plan's to get a job at a mine where they use electrolysis and smelt an ore like ours."

"I see an obstacle," said Hugh. "Suppose you find out a useful process? The new furnaces and machines will cost a large sum."

"The obstacle's not very daunting," Franklin replied. "If John can work out a useful plan, I expect we could get the money we want, and we need not go to London. Interest is low and farming investments are not profitable; our neighbors would no doubt speculate. In fact, you could reckon on getting capital for a promising experiment. But you must supply plans and particulars that would satisfy mining engineers and analysts."

Then Bob returned with the newspaper and said to John. "If you mean to go, I'll go with you."

"But what about your engagement at the hospital?" Hugh inquired.

"I expect the committee will let me off. In Edinburgh young men who want a post like mine are numerous, and I stayed at the hospital in order to study, and get the professional style. A youthful look is a drawback and I have not the sobriety and confidence that command a patient's trust. I must cultivate my social talents, and if you want to get polish, there's nothing like travel. When you were young, they sent raw fellows off on the grand tour."

"My date is not so far back," Hugh rejoined dryly. "When I was born the post-chaise and grand tour were gone. Then I rather imagine your confidence is good!"

John looked up. "My undertaking is not a joke, Bob, and if you come with me, you're not going to meet cultivated people. You'll get up against hard mine bosses, foreign anarchist strike-makers, and rough-house toughs——"

"Oh well," Bob said, laughing, "if somebody gets shot or clubbed, I'll get my chance. When the row is over, the doctor comes out on top. Then, reducing metallic oxides is a chemist's job, and I know something about chemistry. Anyhow, I'm going."

"Give me the newspaper," said John, and presently turned to Hugh. "A good boat sails from Liverpool on Saturday, and that will give me a day or two to look for my American friend. We'll push on dinner and then I'll pull out for the station."

Dinner was rather a melancholy function, and John was dully surprised to feel his resolution melt. Adven-

ture called and he was returning to his own country, but he did not want to go. Ruthwaite had charm; he liked the old house, and perhaps it was strange but he now liked to dine at a table furnished with silver, good glass and flowers. Then to enjoy the society of girls like Alice and Ada was much. Sometimes Alice and he jarred, but sometimes she was kind. John owned he would sooner they disputed than that she left him alone. Yet he must go.

After dinner Ada met him in the hall. "I have much to thank you for, Mr. Wreay, but we won't talk about this," she said. "In a few days I begin my studies and you will be gone. For Alice's sake, I rather wish you were not going."

"Alice has the friends she had when I arrived."

"That is so," Ada agreed. "Do you trust them all?"

John hesitated, because he did not trust Franklin much. Ada smiled.

"I am your friend. I wish you luck; but don't stay too long!"

John went off to pack his bag and when he came down Alice was waiting for him.

"I feel shabby, Jake," she said. "Sometimes I tried to hurt you, but you are very stanch. When my step-father made you trustee he had a happy thought. All the same, I'd sooner you didn't bother about the mine. I'm not greedy; I don't want you to go."

"My uncle reckoned I'd put the job across. I'd hate to let him down."

"You would let down nobody who trusted you. But are you going altogether for your uncle's sake? Al-

though you're very modest, I'd rather like to think you went, to some extent, for mine."

John looked at her hard and his heart beat, but Mrs. Franklin and Hugh came in and a few minutes afterwards the car throbbed outside. The party went with him to the steps, and John was moved because he saw they did not want to let him go; their friendship was warmer than he had thought. Alice gave him her hand last, after he got on board. She smiled, but her smile was gentle and there was something about her John thought new and strangely attractive. Then the car rolled forward, and he resolutely fixed his glance ahead.

PART II

THE NORTH TRAIL

I

THE JUMPING-OFF PLACE

THE big locomotive snorted, a bell began to toll, and thick black smoke tossed about the pines. The gravel cars rolled noisily forward, a man at the door of the caboose shouted to John, and the construction train vanished round a curve. Bob leaned against the water-tank, and with a grimy handkerchief took a cinder from his eye.

"A pullman has some advantages a caboose has not," he said. "All the same, we got a warm bunk and saved five dollars. Then if we had bought sleeper tickets, I doubt if a smart conductor would have let us get on board."

John gave him an amused glance. Bob's clothes were shabby and stained by soil, his hands were bruised and his nails broken. He carried an old skin coat he had bought at a Fort William second-hand store; his other clothes were rolled up in a blue Hudson Bay blanket, and the bundle was not large.

The station agent's shiplap office occupied the side of the single track, and across the line a small clearing broke the forest. Thin snow sprinkled the frozen ground and powdered the fir stumps. At the other end of the clearing were a few frame houses with square fronts carried up above the edge of the shingled roof. A sign on one indicated that it was the *New Era Hotel.*

Bob saw nobody about. After sending off the train, the agent had gone back to his office. The light was

beginning to go, and the settlement looked strangely desolate.

"The spot has no particular charm, and one doesn't get much hint of trade," he said. "Why do they want an hotel?"

"All the settlements have hotels; they're jumping-off places, from which prospectors and survey parties start. I expect a lumber gang is chopping in the back country, and a trail goes to the mine we're bound for."

Bob picked up his bundle and they crossed the clearing. Their boots disturbed the thin snow, and sank in feathery ashes where the slashing had been burned. A narrow veranda ran along the front of the hotel, and John noted that the gauze mosquito-door was gone and the double-windows were put up. In North Ontario the winter is Arctic.

Pushing open the door, they entered a long, bare room. The board wall was badly cracked; the floor was torn by the spikes on lumbermen's boots. A rusty globular stove occupied the middle, at one end was a table on trestles, and a few battered hardwood chairs were scattered about. The room smelt of tobacco, resin and hot iron. When Bob threw down his bundle a man came out of a passage. He was a big, brown-skinned fellow and wore a slate-colored shirt, a short skin coat, and long rubber boots.

"Can you give us a room?" Bob asked.

"We surely can," said the landlord. "If the East-bound's in on time, supper's at six o'clock, Now you're fixed I'll go back to the wood-pile."

He went, and Bob laughed. "It looks as if he didn't mean to light up for us," he remarked, and pulled a chair to the big nickeled lamp. "Well, when you

want a light in Canada, I expect you get it. In England you ring a bell; but we won't philosophize. Give me a match."

He lighted the lamp and his pipe, put his feet on the wood-box and mused drowsily. On the whole, he was satisfied with his adventure, although he had, for the most part, been occupied throwing lumps of rock into big steel buckets on the ore dumps of Lake Superior copper mines. His muscles were hard, his sleep was sound, and he had cultivated a humorous calm.

He doubted if John was satisfied. John had got jobs that demanded greater skill than Bob's, but at the big mines they studied the economic division of labor. One loaded up the reverbatory furnace or perhaps wheeled a truck; one did not know what the next gang did. In order to find out they had gone from mine to mine, and John had made careful notes. He was sternly methodical and now knew something about the earlier stages of copper refining, but he had not yet got into the electrolytic house and seen the pure metal extracted from the acid solution. John, however, meant to do so, and they were going to a small mine in the North.

After a time, a long whistle echoed across the woods, and Bob went to the door. The small pines cut against dazzling fan-shaped beams that lighted all the clearing and touched the trees on the other side with glittering silver. Wheels rolled, and a long row of dimmer lights came out of the dark and stopped. Indistinct figures moved about the water-tank and a pump throbbed. Then an explosive snorting shook the woods, thick smoke swirled across the clearing, and the great train was gone. Bob felt as if the lonely settlement

had for a few minutes been linked up with the noisy world, and then the link had broken.

He let his imagination follow the cars. In the morning they would speed across the desolate watershed from which the creeks ran to Lake Huron; in the afternoon they would stop at Ottawa and then roll on by the river to Montreal. When the next dawn broke, a big liner would haul out of dock for Liverpool. The St. Lawrence was not yet blocked by ice. But Bob knew he must not think about the liner, and looking at the dark, snow-sprinkled woods, he tried to brace up.

"There's something strangely romantic about your railroads," he remarked. "Perhaps it's the contrast; huge locomotives and quarter-mile trains running across wilds as primitive as they were at the beginning."

"One feels something like that," John agreed. "When we build a road we don't wait for traffic. The steel goes first; cultivation and manufactures follow. The road makes the towns it serves." He turned to the landlord, who had joined them. "Looks as if the agent was closing down."

"Nothing's doing," said the other. "Sometimes a few lumber-jacks get off; sometimes they don't. We'll get supper."

The meal was better cooked and served than Bob had expected, and he had now got the habit of eating in about ten minutes as much as he required. He had found out that bunkhouse cooks, and waitresses at cheap hotels, do not give one long to satisfy one's appetite. The landlord said nothing until his plate was empty and then asked: "Where d'you pull out for?"

"The Kamistaqua mine," John replied.

"Looking for a job?"

John nodded. "What d'you think about our chances?"

"I reckon they're pretty good. Kamistaqua's lonesome and up on the height of land the cold is fierce. In winter, Wheeling's boys pull out for the pool-rooms. Kamistaqua's open shop."

Bob knew *open shop* meant the company was not bound by Trade Union rules and engaged free labor.

"I allow there's something to the open shop proposition," the landlord resumed. "The trouble is, when you buck against the Unions you've got to take any foreign scum that comes along. Scandinavians, Dutch and French make pretty good citizens, but we have no use for Black-handers, and bug-house anarchists from Eastern Europe. Canada's a white man's country."

"Then you don't reckon all Europeans white?" said Bob.

"No, sir. Some are *yellow*."

Bob pondered. He did not know much about the United States and Canada, and had at first imagined all who came were welcome and, so to speak, were seized by the great social machine that soon moulded them to the standard type. Something like this was going on, but it did not go as far as he had thought. In fact, he had begun to note a growing fear that American ideals and qualities might become submerged by the alien flood and a firm resolve that they should not. Canada, for example, was not at all English, but she meant to remain Canadian.

"Ours is surely a white man's country and we're going to keep it white," John remarked. "But how do you make the mine?"

"Just now you have got to beat it. In summer, Wheeling gets his truck up by bateau; the loggers chopped a wagon trail to the portage, but they've packed in their supplies and nothing's doing until the snow's firm and the bob-sleds can run."

"How far's the mine from the portage?"

"You might make it in three days, but you want to keep the trail."

John nodded and turned to Bob. "They use the river. In summer, the bateaux go up and down; in winter they run sledges on the ice. This means the trail's not plainly marked, but the ice will not yet carry us."

"I see," said Bob in a thoughtful voice. "We'll need food."

"I can put up all you want, but you had better hit the trail before the snow comes," the landlord replied.

John said they would start in the morning, and when the landlord left them Bob mused. So far, he had travelled by steamer and the cars; to push through tangled woods in biting frost was another thing. Besides, the trail was not marked and Bob admitted he reather shrank from the adventure. Yet John meant to go, and he must see him out. Then he began to ponder the grounds for John's resolve.

To some extent, the grounds were obvious. John had undertaken to guard Alice's inheritance, and what he undertook he did, but Bob imagined this did not account for all. He wondered whether John loved Alice, and on the whole thought not. Anyhow, if

John did love Alice, he was not altogether conscious that he did so. Bob admitted that Alice's charm was strong, but her pride, her imperious temper, and her waywardness were drawbacks. Bob liked calm, the calm that marked a Scottish girl he knew. Flora's voice was even and her glance serene; but Flora was in Edinburgh and he was in the wilds.

He wondered whether his going to the wilds was altogether necessary. John might perhaps have studied copper refining nearer home. Bob imagined the processes generally used were known for long, and scientific societies had studied the electrolytic plan, but to take the easy line was not John's habit. Then Philip had been rather keen to let him go, and Bob thought this significant.

"Suppose you satisfy yourself you can work the Ruthwaite mine economically?" he said.

"If I am satisfied, we'll put up turbines and an electric plant."

"Dynamos cost something. I suppose you'll float a small company?"

"That's Markham's notion," John agreed. "If we turn out good metal, Hugh's friends will invest. The trouble is, we have got to *show* them, and smelting experiments are expensive."

"Have you got much money, Jake?"

John lighted his pipe and for a few moments smoked quietly. Then he said, "I have not. I own a mineral claim I expect to sell when a branch railroad, now building, makes its development easier, a few Canadian shares, a small sum at the Merchants' Bank, and Ruthwaite. How much is Ruthwaite worth?"

"Three thousand pounds; if you're very lucky, you

might get four thousand. People who buy a country house want sporting rights and land. The land is Alice's. But would you sell?"

"I don't want to sell Ruthwaite, but if I can't see another plan, I'll sell all I've got," John said quietly.

Bob knew his resolution and thought he would experiment.

"Your uncle was a shrewd old fellow, Jake, but his will is puzzling. Although he liked you and gave you Ruthwaite, he gave Alice the farms. Did he know you were not rich?"

"I think he knew."

"Then, his object's hard to see."

"That is so. I don't see his object, and there's no use in speculating about it," John replied.

Bob thought he, himself, saw. He had speculated about it much, and imagined Alice was curious. Water-tube John generally had an object. His nephew however, did not see, and Bob's business was not to enlighten him. After a time he got up and they went off to bed.

II

THE BROKEN TRAIL

BOB loosed the straps that galled his shoulders, and pulling off his mittens beat his numbed hands. Now he had stopped, the cold pierced his old skin coat. For three days he had labored over the wagon trail and slept in the woods. Perhaps it was strange, but he had slept; the trouble was to get up in the biting cold at dawn, help to cook breakfast, and resume his load.

John declared Bob's load, by comparison with a prospector's, was light. All he must carry was his blanket, the clothes he needed for the winter, and food for six days; but Bob had frankly had enough. His back hurt, his muscles were sore, and the pack-straps cut his skin. Although the load was lighter than when he started, he did not know if this was a relief. In the wilds one ate much, and John reckoned that they carried a day's extra rations. If they reached the mine later than he expected it would be awkward.

So far, they had followed the lumbermen's road. The track was horribly rough and ran through muskegs, where small fir-trunks had been thrown into the mud, and across strange round-backed rocks. The rocks, covered by thin frozen snow, were slippery. Then, in places roots and brush partly blocked the road, and Bob wondered how the freighters hauled their loads. All the same, it was a road and stood for human effort.

Men had made the rude track; it linked up spots where they lived behind log walls, safe from the stinging frost. Now it had stopped, and in front were desolate, tangled woods.

A rude shack, piles of branches, and a heap of rusty meat-cans occupied the clearing. On the river-bank logs were stacked by a skidway, down which they would plunge when the ice broke and the melting snow swelled the flood, Now all was quiet; the lumbermen had gone, and the tracks of jumper-sledges indicated their road was downstream. Bob knew the mine was near the watershed. On a rise, a pine from which some branches had been chopped indicated the way, but this was all.

"The boys have pulled out," said John. "Logs worth sawing are not numerous; I expect this lot's for pitprops. Well, I'd reckoned on stopping for a night with the gang. We have made a pretty good hike and you're fresh to the trail."

"We can noon at their shack," Bob replied. "Let's go in and make a fire."

In a few minutes flames leaped about the snapping branches on the bunkhouse hearth, and a blackened pot began to boil. John took a thin, doughy bannock and a can of meat from his pack and brewed some strong green tea, and they began their meal. When it was over they lighted their pipes.

"I don't know that a deserted bunkhouse is a cheerful spot, but I want to stay," said Bob. "Now the road will carry us no farther, the bush is daunting. Can you find the trail?"

John smiled. "I was born in the bush. Anyhow, one couldn't lose the river and the mine's on the bank."

"Rivers wind about and we must go straight. For one thing, the hotel keeper said three days to the camp. We left the settlement at daybreak, but it's now noon. Looks as if we were not up to time."

"We'll make it all right," John remarked, and pulled out his watch.

"I'm not very dull," said Bob, who got up and fastened on his pack.

He took his mittens from a branch by the fire, went to the door, and shivered, for the wind was very keen. They climbed the rise to the blazed tree and John, hardly pausing to look about, went down the other side. Bob remarked his confidence, because, so far as he himself could see, all the pine indicated was the trail started there. To walk fast was awkward, and Bob had not the bushman's habit of lifting his feet. Sometimes he struck dead branches in the thin snow and sometimes round-topped rocks blocked the way and his pack bothered him. When one carries a good load, to balance on an icy slope is hard. Speed, however, was needed; John, moving with an easy stride, went fast, and Bob saw he must keep up.

They found another blazed pine, with a slab of bark sliced off, and crossed a creek by a chopped log. Then for an hour or two Bob got no hint that men had plunged into the woods before. The bush was not thick, and the trees were small. Some were unrooted by the wind and leaned against each other with branches locked. In belts they were burned, and at a distance the bare rampikes glittered like silver. When one got near one saw the trunks were smooth and black. The snow was a shining gray that melted in the background to blue. The sky one saw behind the trees was green.

All was very quiet, and the quietness vaguely disturbed Bob. It looked as if nothing lived in the bush; the desolation weighed on him, as he had not felt it weigh until the road stopped. To push out from the last link with all he knew was something of an adventure; but he was not the first, and where others had gone he imagined he could go. In the meantime, he must concentrate on getting forward.

At length a faint orange shimmer touched the snow, and he stopped. In the South, the sky was going smoky red, and a pale star shone between dark branches. His breath floated about him; he felt slack and dull, for the cold bit deep.

"I'm nearly frozen, Jake," he said. "What about pitching camp?"

"When we hit a rock or thick bush we'll stop," John replied, and while the red glow faded they pushed on.

By and by John threw off his pack in a hollow where a few broken pines had fallen. He pulled out a small axe, and when he got to work the rhythmic chopping rolled across the woods. Bob picked up the chips and branches, and awkwardly made a fire. Then he scraped up snow and shook some flour from a cotton bag into a can. Stern necessity braced him for the effort, but he then and afterwards hated the labor of making camp after a hard day's march.

He thought the cold and fatigue did not bother John, who built with logs and branches a rude wall on two sides of the fire. When he threw down the axe the stars shone with a strange steely brightness above the black pine tops and the fire threw red reflections on the trunks that sometimes faded and sometimes got

distinct. John took the can of melted snow, and beating up flour and yeast-powder poured the thin paste into a frying-pan.

"Flapjacks to-night. Where's the pork?" he said, and tossed a light brown cake to Bob.

The pork was cut, and Bob put a few slices into the pan. The stuff was hard and looked like marble; Bob thought it would rather break than bend. It melted in the pan, John poured in fresh paste, and Bob with keen satisfaction ate the greasy cakes. The strong tea burned his lips and his face was scorched, but his body was getting warm and he had not in England known the comfort the hot food gave him. He ate with savage eagerness, like a hungry animal; and then wrapping his blanket round him, got down on the springy branches John had piled in the corner and sighed with pure content.

"You have forgotten something. Take off your boots," said John.

Bob smiled. "In the Old Country, I was perhaps fastidious; in the bush, I'd sooner go to bed with my boots on."

"You don't know the bush yet, and the cold is pretty fierce to-night. If your boots are not dry when you start off in the morning, you take some chances of getting frozen feet. When the cold is properly fierce, you can't wear boots at all. You use moccasins; they're soft, like a glove."

"If the frost is much keener than this, I reckon I was a fool to leave the hospital," said Bob.

He pulled off his boots, wrapped the blanket round his feet, and stretching his legs to the fire, presently went to sleep. When he woke at dawn he shivered

and for a few minutes lay still. Stars shone above the pine-tops and the branches, moving in the wind, shook down dusty snow. The fire crackled, and smoke rolled about the trunks, but the cold was Arctic. The day-break start tried Bob's pluck. To make camp in the evening was hateful; to get up was worse. For all that, John was cooking breakfast, and Bob must help.

After breakfast they pushed on, and at noon stopped by the frozen river to boil some tea. In places the ice was covered by thin snow; in places it was clear and black, and Bob imagined these had frozen recently. While they smoked by the fire John knitted his brows.

"The current is pretty fast and the black ice is new, but I reckon we can get across. The river runs round the high ground ahead and the trail goes up the bank, but the proper line is across the loop. Well, we're not making fast time and had better cut out the loop."

"You have not a compass," Bob remarked.

John smiled. "I have got a watch and can see the sun. Anyhow, a bushman knows the North."

They crossed the ice and some broken hills, and in the evening came back to the river. The stream flowed through a deep hollow, and dark pines rolled down the other bank. John stopped, and Bob looked about with curiosity, because it was obvious they must get across. Moreover, they must do so soon. The best spot for a camp was under the trees on the other side, and the light was going.

The fast current was not all frozen. In spots where rocks broke the channel it ran in angry waves that looked as black as ink. Between the open belts

were pools on which the ice was cracked and rough. This indicated that the eddies had tossed about the drifting floes until the frost was keen enough to bind the crashing blocks. John went down the bank and broke a hole with his axe.

"In the slacks the ice would carry a bob-sledge," he said. "The weak spot's where the tail stream runs behind the rock. Looks as if it didn't spread much, but went for the rapid. Still, we ought to get over."

The thick pines called. One would get warmth and shelter among the trunks, but Bob was not keen to go. He was a trout fisherman and knew something about the currents that meet and run behind a rock. For all that, he did not see a better spot, and it would soon be dark.

They left the bank and went cautiously. One heard sharp cracks, for the ice heaved and worked with the pulse of the angry stream. Bob imagined he saw the white surface bend, but his eyes watered with the cold. When they got level with the big rock the ice was black, the cracks were louder, and John turned downstream. A worn stone rose, as if from deep water, near the top of the tail rapid. The rapid was not frozen and foam leaped between the belts of ice.

When they were a few yards from the stone, Bob heard a ringing crack, and the ice bent. He saw a streak of dark water and John, stiffly poised, on a moving block. The ice had broken and John was going downstream. After a few moments, he swung his arms and jumped. The block tilted and crashed against another, but John was on the stone.

Bob braced himself. John could not stay long on

the stone; in an hour or two he would freeze, but since the current swept round both sides of the obstacle, the ice was, no doubt, as thin on one side as the other. Bob threw off his pack.

"I'll get as near you as I can," he said.

"Go for the bank and get a branch," said John.

Bob went and broke a long branch. Coming back on the other side of the stone, he stopped a yard or two off. The ice cracked ominously and he imagined it was weakest where the current washed the rock.

"We have got to risk it, Jake," he said.

John seized the branch and let himself go. The ice bent and water welled up from the cracks, but he slid across. Bob got his pack and in a few moments they climbed the steep bank. They did not talk; now the strain was over, Bob felt tired and limp. He pictured John's clinging to the rock at the top of the rapid and getting colder. Bob admitted that the bush had begun to daunt him. All who took the North trail did not come back.

After supper he recovered something of his pluck. The wind did not pierce the wood, and the reflections from the fire played cheerfully about the trunks. In the background were glimmering ice and snow, and the rapid's turmoil throbbed across the woods, but Bob had done with all this until daybreak. He had eaten and was warm, and John sat opposite, smoking an old pipe. At the beginning Bob had approved John; now he felt he loved him.

"We were lucky because the block didn't tilt you off," he said.

"In the bush, one doesn't bother much about risks like that, The block was pretty steady and I reckoned

I could make the stone. Anyhow, it looks as if the luck was mine."

"Not altogether; I feel the luck was *ours*. You see, you're important. We need you at Ruthwaite."

"You got along before I arrived," John remarked with a smile.

"That is so; the trouble is, I doubt if Hugh altogether knew where we went. When you go downhill you go pretty fast."

"The estate is going down," John agreed. "After you talked about John o' Scales, I went to the library."

"I rather imagined you would go," Bob remarked. "Well?"

"The tale of the ambitious steward gave me a useful hint. It's possible Dalton is playing Elliot, but I doubt if he's a crook."

"In a sense, Dalton is honest. I expect he'll keep the rules of the game, but he knows the game and Hugh does not. To bother about money is not his habit. In some ways, Hugh is clever; in some ways, he's a fool."

"I reckon Franklin is not at all a fool."

Bob smiled. "You imagine Philip saw Hugh was getting entangled but left him alone? As a rule Philip has an object but sometimes his object's not very plain. For example, I think he wanted you to start for Canada, although he indicated that you might with advantage find out if you could not study copper refining in England before you resolved to start."

"Let's be frank," said John. "Suppose we admit Franklin knew Hugh was letting down his and Alice's estate? Franklin ought to have warned him. Do you know why he did not?"

"I haven't much to go upon. All the same, I imagine Philip wants Alice."

For a few moments John's look was inscrutable. Bob, studying him, thought him very like Water-tube John. Then John said quietly: "If Franklin wants Alice, why is he willing Hugh should squander her fortune?"

"I don't know if Philip is willing, but he's rich and not greedy. In fact, I doubt if Alice's fortune tempts him much. It's possible Hugh's embarrassments would give him his chance. Alice, of course, does not give me her confidence, but I rather think she does not like Philip."

"Ah!" said John, and knocked out his pipe, "Well, our job's to find out all we can about the copper, and in the meantime I reckon it will keep us occupied."

He threw fresh wood on the fire, pulled his blanket round him and lay down, but Bob doubted if he went to sleep. A few minutes afterwards Bob's eyes got heavy, and he thought the firelight got dim. The smoke melted, the pine-trunks vanished in the gloom, and he knew no more.

III

THE MINE

AT noon on the day John expected to reach the mine he stopped and made a fire behind a rock. The smoke went straight up and floated in a pale-blue streak above the trees. The dark branches did not move, and the frost was keen. Bob, sitting by the fire, waited tranquilly for the black can to boil. The frost and reflected light had burned his skin, his eyes ached, and his muscles were sore. To know they ought to finish the long march by nightfall was some relief, and he did not bother because the can was slow to boil. Soon after it did boil they must start again.

By and by a sharp report rolled across the woods. In the lonely wilds the noise was startling, but Bob heard it with keen satisfaction. Since they crossed the river he had seen nothing to indicate a trail, and had begun to wonder whether John's calculations were accurate.

"Who do you think is shooting?" he inquired.

"Perhaps a trapper, although I reckon it's somebody from the mine. If you throw some green wood on the fire, we'll soon find out."

Bob got the axe and chopped a few branches from a small pine. When the flame played about the needles thick white smoke rolled up. John began to mix some water and flour.

"We'll give the fellow a hot bannock. Open the last can of beef."

When the bannock was in the fry-pan they heard branches crack and a tall young man, carrying a rifle, jumped from the rock behind the camp. Bob remarked that his fur cap and fur coat were good; in fact, he was not the sort of man Bob had thought to meet in the woods.

"Did you get something just now?" John inquired.

"I did not," said the other. "I thought I'd trailed a wolf and saw a shadow between the trunks."

"Don't you know a wolf's tracks?"

"I reckoned it was a wolf because there's nothing else about. Anyhow, I was going to stop and noon. You are boiling tea; I've got some food."

"Turn out the bannock, Bob," said John.

They began to eat and did not talk. On the trail one does not talk until one has satisfied one's appetite. When they lighted their pipes the young man said: "I'm from the Kamistaqua mine. Days like this are not numerous, and I started out to hunt. Where are you going?"

"We reckoned to make Kamistaqua ahead of dark. Can we make it?"

"Sure," said the other. "Are you looking for a job?"

He studied them, and Bob was conscious that he had not for some days washed or shaved.

"If the grub and pay are all right, we'll take a job and hold it down," said John. "I've gone out on the prospecting trail since I was a boy, and my partner has loaded up the skips at a Michigan ore-dump. I

was at the roasting stack, and I guess we satisfied the boss."

"Pay's standard. The boys claim the grub might be better, but I give them the best I can get. Looks as if the Canadians shipped off their high-grade food and used the other sort. But why did you quit?"

"We got fed up and my partner wanted to look about."

"Very well. I'm Wheeling, the mine boss, and I'll try you. You don't look like anarchists."

"I'm a moderate Grit. Bob's something of an English Tory. Anyhow, we won't make trouble about politics."

"That's good," Wheeling remarked. "Some of the boys are Reds, and I reckon I've had enough. But if you know Michigan, suppose you talk. It's most three years since I crossed the frontier."

John talked, and Bob mused. On the whole, he thought his luck was good, for Wheeling was not like the grim, hard-faced boss Bob had known in Michigan. He was young and frank, although he looked resolute. Moreover, Bob imagined Wheeling approved John. By and by Wheeling got up, and John scattered and stamped out the fire. Bob pulled the pack-straps across his aching shoulders, and they set off.

At sunset Wheeling stopped on a hillside and indicated a group of small wooden buildings some distance off.

"The Kamistaqua mine," he said.

Bob looked about with keen satisfaction. The sky behind the hill was smoky-red; the hill across the valley shone with yellow and pink reflections against a back-

ground of cold blue. In the valley the snow was gray and the pines were black. Bob saw the landscape was ruggedly beautiful, but the sharp contrast of light and shadow did not hold his glance. A mile or two off, smoke floated from a slender stack, and after the lonely trail the ugly cluster of buildings had a strange charm.

The stack implied an engine, and where man used steam man was master. In the bush he was a feeble animal. At the mine, log walls kept out the frost, and when one's work was done one loafed and talked in warmth and comfort. In England Bob had thought he liked romantic adventures; but he had had enough. He was civilized, and instinctively sought the domestic hearth, even when all that stood for it was a rusty bunkhouse stove.

They pushed on, and after a time hoarse shouts came up the hill. Small, dark figures moved in the snow. One ran to a shack and another shouted as if the first had shut the door. Bob thought the fellow beat on the door, and then a companion hoisted him to the roof. John looked at Wheeling, who began to run.

"I guess the boys did not expect me yet, and Ivan and Mike are making trouble," he remarked.

Bob was tired but he kept up, and when they got nearer he saw a man break the door of the shack. Two or three more stood outside, but nobody went in. The fellow on the roof was pulling off the shingles.

"They mean to get the Chink," gasped Wheeling. "You're white men. Are you going to see me out?"

John nodded, but Bob reserved his judgment. Since a Chink was an Oriental, he did not see what their being white men had to do with it. All the same, he imagined he had better play up to John.

Plunging into thick timber, they lost the mine. Some snow had blown between the trunks, and Bob struck his feet on fallen branches he could not see. Sometimes he crossed a slippery rock and lurched about with his heavy pack; sometimes he lost his balance and plunged down a steep pitch. He dropped behind, and thought he would not have known where the others were but for the noise they made.

At length he smashed through a clump of juniper, and reached the clearing at the mine. The light was going, but the figures of men on the ore-dump cut against the snow. For the most part they were quiet, and Bob imagined they were satisfied to look on. A smaller group occupied the ground in front of the shack with the broken door and called somebody to come out. The fellow on the roof was obviously trying to make a hole through which he could jump. It looked as if nobody yet saw Wheeling and John, a short distance in front of Bob.

"Gimme a rock; I'll get him from here," shouted the fellow on the roof, and Bob saw why nobody went into the shack.

A Chinaman crouched behind the broken door. The light was going fast, but one could distinguish his blue clothes and his yellow face, marked by a white line of teeth. His right arm was drawn back, his body was bent, and he looked like a savage animal. Bob imagined he held a knife and was braced for a jump. Shingles fell from the roof and a man handed up a big stone. Then somebody shouted, as if the group on the ore-dump knew Wheeling had arrived.

Wheeling swung his rifle. The butt struck a man's back and the fellow went down. Wheeling drove the

muzzle against another's ribs, but Bob did not know what John did, because next moment he himself was occupied. The man on the roof leaped down and fell on him, and Bob, embarrassed by his pack, rolled in the snow. After his long march he was tired and slack, but seeing the other tried to get his knee on his chest, he seized the fellow's throat, and pulled him down.

Bob did not remember much about the struggle. He had played Rugby football at a famous school, but in the scrimmage in which he now engaged he saw one must not bother about rules. His antagonist was big and muscular and meant to knock him out; he used his knees and feet, and it looked as if he would not hesitate to use his teeth. Bob stuck to his throat, until when they rolled over and he got uppermost he risked letting go with one hand and used his fist.

Then somebody pulled him off and threw him back. He got up shakily and saw the miner sitting in the snow. The fellow looked dazed and his face was bleeding; Bob saw his own knuckles were red, although he did not remember taking off his mittens. Wheeling, a few yards off, held his rifle by the muzzle; John leaned against the shack and laughed. The group on the ore-dump had vanished and the Chinaman was carrying some meat-cans from the shack. He had put up his knife, and his look was calm. In fact, except for the miner in the snow and a hole in the shingled roof, nothing indicated that a savage struggle had raged about the shack.

"Get up and light out!" Wheeling said to the miner, and signed Bob. "Go to my office."

"I want my mittens," Bob said dully.

Wheeling looked about, and picking up the mittens from the trampled snow, went to a small log building and opened the door.

"Take a smoke if you like. I'll be back before long," he said, and vanished.

Bob sat down. A stove occupied a corner, its lower half shining red.

The small room was very warm and smelt of resinous wood and hot iron. Bob's exhausted body felt the sudden change of temperature, and the reaction made him dizzy. After a few minutes the dizziness began to go, and the Chinaman came in.

"I makee light," he said, smiling, and went to the lamp.

Bob remarked that his blue clothes were very neat and his look was serene. In fact, it was rather hard to picture his clutching a knife while his lips curled back from his clenched teeth. He threw some wood into the stove, and when he went off Bob began to look about.

A large safe was opposite the stove, and its top carried some bottles of acids, lumps of ore, and glass retorts. On the table were a writing-pad, a few books and small scales. Old rubber boots and snowshoes occupied a corner, soil-stained clothes and slickers pegs on the cracked, matchboard wall, and a door indicated that Wheeling's bedroom was on the other side.

"Are you feeling better, Bob?" John inquired.

"My head hurts. I wonder how the other fellow feels. I thought him, so to speak, resigned when the boss separated us."

"Wheeling used his rifle-butt; perhaps that accounts

for something," said John. "Two of the others were trying to get at me and I couldn't help."

Bob lighted his pipe, and by and by Wheeling returned. "The boys have cooled off. When Ivan breaks loose we get a rough house," he remarked.

"What was the trouble about?" Bob asked.

"Grub. Ivan and his partners didn't expect me back and wanted the cook to put up a particular hash they like. Li would not; he knows his job and how long the stores ought to last. Ivan reckoned he was not going to be bluffed by a Chink."

"But the other lot on the ore-dump?"

"They were willing to watch the fight. I can't state how far they'd have let Ivan's gang go, but after all Li is a Chink. Anyway, I imagine Ivan has had enough."

The harsh clanging of beaten iron echoed about the shack, and Wheeling got up.

"Supper's in the bunkhouse. We'll go along."

The bunkhouse was a narrow shed built of shiplap boards. Rough shelves, divided into beds, went along the back wall; a table on trestles occupied the middle and at one end was a big stove. The pipe bent and crossed the room, in order to radiate as much heat as possible. Men in soiled clothes crowded the benches at the table, and the cook threw down tin plates. When he brought in a tray of steaming food Wheeling sat down.

"You'll go without dessert to-night; the pie's burned," he said. "When you start a circus, Li can't cook. In the morning Ivan and his pals will fix the shack. The company won't stand for the time they take."

The others said nothing and they began to eat. In about ten minutes the Chinaman carried off the plates, and Wheeling returned to his office. The hard bench had no back, and Bob and John sat down on a box by the stove. Some of the others got into their bunks, and a group at the table played cards. Bob's antagonist occupied the top of the wood-box and smoked a pipe with a painted china bowl. He was a big dark-skinned fellow, and his hair was long and shaggy.

"You are a fool, comrade; you fight for your employer!" he said to Bob.

"I don't know if it's important, but I really fought for the cook," Bob replied. "He was up against three or four of you."

"Then, you are a worse fool! While we go hungry, he saves food for his master. Besides, he is not a white man. The company buys him cheap; he cuts your wages."

"Ivan's not white, anyhow; he's a bughouse foreign anarchist and a free-labor man," somebody remarked.

"The trouble about the open shop is, if you don't join up with the boys who hold out for standard wages, you can't grumble when somebody cuts under you," said John.

"Now you're giving it him," another agreed, and Ivan's eyes sparkled.

"I am an individualist and the big unions deny my liberty. They make rules for the mass, and all rules are bad. In my country there is no freedom; unless I bribe the police-agents I am not allowed to work. I come to yours and I must not take a job unless the labor boss gives me leave."

"After all, you choose your boss by vote," said John.

"If the boys don't like him, you can fire him out. I expect getting rid of a police-agent is another thing."

"Sometimes a bomb is useful. We are up against all bosses," another foreigner remarked.

"Mike was not up against boss Wheeling long," a Canadian commented. "He talks pretty good, but when he saw Wheeling getting after him he quit."

"Where there are no rules and bosses one is happy," Ivan resumed. "Man is not born a criminal. The laws make crime and some day we will have none."

Bob studied the fellow. His face was stern and marked by deep lines, as if he had known trouble. He was no doubt a revolutionary crank, but Bob noted his philosophic calm. Although they had fought he imagined Ivan bore him no antagonism, and after the struggle was over he had left the cook alone. It looked as if the fellow's hate was, so to speak, impersonal and he fought against a system, not people, he disapproved. Yet Bob imagined his detachment implied ruthlessness.

In the meantime John remarked that unjust laws made crime, and others joined the argument. Bob thought one or two argued cleverly, but he was getting dull. By contrast with the cold outside, the bunkhouse was hot, and thick tobacco smoke drifted about. Indistinct faces and figures stood out from the smoke and then got blurred.

Bob got into his bunk. For a few minutes he heard the cordwood snap in the stove and harsh voices rise and fall. Then the voices died away, and Bob thought he heard the river running in the woods at Allerdale. He pulled up his blanket and went to sleep.

IV

MAIL-DAY

THIN snow blew about and powdered Bob's skin coat. The hair was coming off the coat, and although it had not cost much, Bob imagined the storekeeper at Fort William had cheated him. His mittens were good, but when one's hand is enclosed in a loose fur bag, to use the axe is awkward. In the North, one cannot wear gloves with separate finger-stalls. Bob was splitting cordwood and must strike quick and hard between the rays that ran off from the center of the blocks. His main object, however, was not to strike his foot.

John had got a better job and was engaged as a rock-borer. Bob was not at all jealous. He admitted that in Canada his particular talents were not worth much, and the jobs he got were monotonous and hard. For example, splitting and stacking cordwood was a dreary occupation. If one did not fit the blocks properly, the top of the pile fell off, and some skill was needed to keep the front upright. He had, however, built up a good stack and thought he would like a smoke but with a caution he had learned at other mines he first looked about.

He saw nobody in the clearing. The river was frozen hard and, winding through the valley, looked like a white road. A line drawn in blue and gray followed the bank in flowing curves and indicated that a sledge

had gone downstream. Bob understood the sledge ought to return soon with supplies and the mail. In places the wind had shaken the snow from the pines and they rolled back in somber rows, for the stiff foliage was rather black than green. On the slope of the hill a plume of thin blue smoke trailed from a tall iron stack, and the snow had melted from the shingled roofs. At the bottom of the hill were stumps and piles of wood. The sky was dark and the background harshly gray and white.

Bob got behind the stack. His hands were numb, and to cut the plug tobacco and strike a match was hard. He got a light and resolved to risk sitting down for a minute or two out of the bitter wind. A minute or two would be enough.

Wheeling came round the corner of the stack and Bob jumped up. Wheeling looked at the wood and then looked at Bob, who said, "The wind wouldn't let me get a light. I have not stopped long."

"I expect that's so," Wheeling agreed. "If you stop long enough to reckon on, you'll freeze! How d'you like it stacking wood?"

"I have had jobs I like better," Bob admitted.

Wheeling put his hands on top of the pile and pushed. The blocks on the other side rattled, as if a number had fallen off.

"You want to key the stuff like this," he said, and replaced three or four pieces. "The blizzards are pretty fierce, but the pile must stand until we roast the ore."

"You use wood for smelting?"

"We can't get coal, and when freight's expensive you have got to refine your metal before you send it off. The Government gives us limited rights for timber,

but when the ice breaks we start up the turbines and use electric power. Are you satisfied living in the bunk-house with the boys?"

"I lived with the boys in Michigan and was engaged for a general roustabout," said Bob. "Your gang doesn't bother me and some are good sorts, but I imagine you have got an awkward team."

"They're surely awkward," Wheeling agreed. "When the big unions get after you, you know what they want. As a rule, they're out for a plain object worth fighting over; but these foreign anarchists are freakish cranks. I like white men. Now perhaps you see why you got your job?"

Bob thought he saw, and since he had studied the foreigners, rather sympathized with Wheeling. All the same, he had declared he was a workman, and in the meantime imagined this met the bill.

"Oh well," he said, "I reckoned you hired us because we looked hefty fellows, and since we had come a long way to get a job, you expected we'd hold it down." He indicated the stack and added: "Do you think I'm making good?"

Wheeling gave him a keen glance and smiled. "You're English; I guess we'll let it go! Anyhow, there's wood enough around to keep you from freezing."

He went off and Bob resumed his labor. He approved Wheeling, but he meant to reserve his judgment. To show he was the boss's friend might have some drawbacks, and he doubted if his support were worth much. All the same he imagined some trouble was brewing, and Wheeling knew.

In the evening the sledge-team from the settlement

arrived, and Bob took Wheeling's mail to the office. Wheeling was not at the office, and Bob found him at the forge. A lamp hung from a beam, the smith was at the blower, and a pile of charcoal glimmered on the hearth. The light, however, was not good, and Wheeling bent over a vice, chipping with a cold chisel a piece of iron. Bob gave him the packet and went out.

After supper Bob, sitting by the stove, opened his letters. One was from Alice and at the end she wrote: "Your going to a mine in the wilds indicates that John has not made much progress yet. When he has done all he means to do he will be satisfied to stop. In the meantime, your business is to take care of him. Sometimes he's rather a dear old thing, but his impulsive rashness is a handicap, and you are not bothered by anything like that——"

Bob laughed. Alice knew John: but on the surface her hint was ridiculous. In Canada, at all events, John's word went. People trusted him and gave him responsible posts. Nobody particularly trusted Bob; his job was to load up blocks of ore and stack cordwood. But this was not important. Although when Alice indicated his duty, she had tried to strike a careless note, he rather thought she really wanted him to take care of John.

He looked about. Wheeling had not come in for supper, and the cook had carried off the plates. Some of the men disputed about a game of cards; some lay in their bunks and studied their letters. They were a mixed lot: Scandinavians, Americans, Canadians, Irish and Scots, and a number from Eastern Europe whose nationality Bob could not fix. He speculated with languid curiosity about the scenes the news from

home recalled. Perhaps one saw a lonely log-house in the Canadian woods, another a mining town in the Montana ranges. Some heard the roar of crowded cities, and some felt the silence brooding over wide Russian plains. They were no doubt moved, but their faces were masks; their job was to hew copper from the Laurentian rocks, and few would see again the land from which they came.

Ivan and two or three talked in a corner. Their voices were low, but Bob knew they used German. He understood Ivan had escaped from Moscow to Austria, and Poles and Slovaks sometimes for convenience spoke the language they hated. It looked as if the mail had brought them news, but this had nothing to do with Bob and he glanced at John. John was in his bunk and held a letter to the light. Bob had given him the envelope and knew Alice's hand. He noted that John's mouth was crooked and he smiled.

Then the Chinese cook came in, went to John's bunk, and said something quietly. John jumped down and they went out together, but in a few minutes Li returned and gave Bob a note on a torn scrap of paper.

"Bring your tools and come along."

Bob nodded and opened his pack. He had bought in England a few small surgical instruments, put up for travelers in a leather case. The things were rather toys than tools, but Bob had used them at the Michigan mines. Although he was young, his hands and nerve were good.

When he got to the office, John and the cook stood by the table. Wheeling occupied a chair and leaned forward with his hands clasped across his face.

"I don't know how I'll make it, but you must get

the sled-team harnessed up," he said in a hoarse voice. "Six days, in the frost and hellish pain, to the settlement! Well, an Indian, shot through the stomach, walked three hundred miles to Fort William——"

He paused, rocked his body, and resumed: "The fellow could see; I can't! Then they haven't a doctor at the settlement, and I might wait a day for the train to Ottawa."

Bob pulled off his fur coat and jacket and opened the leather case. He had seen strong men wrung by pain before, and knew why Wheeling talked.

"What's the trouble?" he asked quietly.

"An iron splinter in his eye," John replied.

"Wash out and fill that basin," Bob ordered the cook, and crossed the floor to a shelf.

A kettle was on the stove and a wet rag in the basin. On a shelf were a few sample bottles of engine oil. Bob pulled out the corks and smelled the stuff. He thought one bottle held vegetable oil, and putting it by the stove, moved the hanging lamp to another hook. John noted that he was cool and quick, but he had already found out that Bob knew his job. Then Bob took a magnifying glass from the case and put his hand on Wheeling's shoulder.

"Lean back," he said. "We'll soon cure you."

Wheeling leaned back and clenched his fist. His eyes were shut, but the lids of one were red and swollen. Bob signed John to get behind the chair, and dipping his hands in the hot water rubbed his fingers. In the Canadian frost, the muscles of one's fingers are sometimes stiff when one's body is warm.

When he was satisfied he took a pencil from the table and pulled back Wheeling's eyelid. His eye was

horribly bloodshot, and Bob's glass showed a piece of metal embedded in the lid. The piece was small, and Bob imagined he could not get hold of it easily. Yet he must be quick, because Wheeling could not long bear the pain.

Picking up a small forceps, he put the pencil on Wheeling's eyelid and signed John to hold both firm; then he made the cook understand Wheeling's head must be kept steady. He saw he could trust his helpers, and knew he must trust his luck. His hand was firm, and the hot water had relaxed his muscles.

He set his mouth and used the forceps. Wheeling groaned and tried to jerk his head, but the Chinaman held fast and Bob's luck was good. Throwing down the forceps, he got the bottle of oil and shook a drop into Wheeling's eye.

"It's done!" he said. "You can let him go."

Wheeling sank down in the chair, but his body and arms were still.

"You have got the blamed thing?"

"Sure," said Bob. "Can't you feel it's gone?"

"Yes," said Wheeling slowly. "Now I can move my eye. It *is* gone. Oh, the blessed relief!"

He was quiet for a few moments and then resumed: "Say, you've made a great job! What are you, anyhow?"

"At present I'm a miner's laborer," said Bob, and put up his case. "Keep your eye shut. Where are your clean handkerchiefs?"

Wheeling told him and Bob tearing one for a wet pad, tied another round his head.

"Now if you like, you can take a smoke."

Wheeling signed the Chinaman to bring some cigar-

ettes and gave the packet to Bob. When they had lighted their cigarettes Li went off, and Wheeling put up his feet and leaned back in his chair.

"I feel I don't want to move for about a week," he said to Bob. "As a rule, a mine boss gets some nasty knocks. I've been hit by a blow-out shot, I've broken my leg, and burned my arm when a dynamo wire short-circuited, but nothing hurt like that small bit of iron. Before your partner sent for you I was surely scared. Didn't know if I could stand for the journey to Ottawa, and I'd have got there *blind*. Well, I guess I owe you something."

"Perhaps we had better move the light," said Bob, who put back the lamp and turned down the flame. "You mustn't strain your sound eye, and for a time we'll keep the bandage on the other."

Wheeling's sound eye twinkled. "We'll let it go at that! My eye hurts some yet. What d'you think about Li Wan? I guess he helped you?"

"He did help. I reckoned I could trust Li, and needn't tell him much. He knew what to do."

"He went for your partner," Wheeling remarked meaningly. "I didn't send him; the pain was too bad."

"When things are awkward, one does send for John," said Bob smiling. "But has Li some particular grounds for wanting to help you?"

"Not at all. I don't know if he likes me and perhaps he does not. The Chinks are a queer inscrutable crowd. I see the boys don't get after him; he puts up pretty good hash and we're both satisfied."

Bob smoked his cigarette, and then looked at the lamp. "I think we'll put out the light and send you

to bed. In the morning I'll fix the bandage again, and for a day or two you must keep out of the frost."

Wheeling let them go, and when they started for the bunkhouse Bob laughed.

"I like that man, Jake! I think he likes us, but he's puzzled."

"It's possible," John agreed with some dryness. "When I arrived in England, you puzzled me. However, I reckon I don't puzzle Wheeling. He's my sort, and if I'd pulled a splinter from his eye I'd have owned up I was a doctor."

"I've known you to hide your talents," Bob rejoined. "Well, my notion is, Ivan is hiding his. Since the mail arrived he and his pals have been talking hard. I rather think they're plotting; but in the meantime, it has nothing to do with me."

When they went into the house a man in the group in the corner looked up.

"How was der boss? He was seek?"

"He had got something in his eye, but we took it out."

"Ah, so? He work in forge. To burn the eye is bad. It is some day before he is around again?"

"I don't know," said Bob, and got into his bunk.

V

BOB'S PROMOTION

JOHN unhooked a small flat lamp from his hat and got down on his knees. The pale illumination touched a throbbing machine, and flickered on a bright steel bar. The end of the bar and a pipe went into the rock and muddy grit came out of the hole. John cautiously pushed down a rod and noted the distance to which the wood was wet. This indicated the depth of the hole he was drilling for a blasting shot.

Then he looked at his watch and frowned. He had known the pneumatic drill was not running full speed, but the hole was shallower than he expected and he turned a wheel. He heard the rock crumble under the plunging bar and knew the steel point was good, because he had not long since seen it ground and tempered at the forge. The machine, on a massive iron stand, clanged and jarred, but although he had opened the valve as far as it would go, the beat had not quickened much. The trouble was at the air-compresser, in the engine-house.

John turned his head and looked about. Rough beams, supported by small pine trunks, crossed the roof of the tunnel, and dim lights blinked between the timbers. The mine was not deep and the props were widely spaced, but at a short distance off they melted together. A big wire-bound pipe sprang in a palpitat-

ing curve from the drill. Its bends swelled and moved on the rock floor, and the thing looked like a giant snake. A few yards from the machine a gallery went off, and the beat of hammers echoed in the gloom; but John saw nobody he could send to the engine-house, and he did not want to stop the drill.

Then an indistinct figure cut against the light and John got up. The other advanced, leaned over the machine, and looked at the hole. John held up the wet measuring rod.

"No punch to her!" said the foreman, and opened a valve.

The curved pipe got limp, the air blew off with a hissing noise, and the foreman, pulling a lever, lifted the drill. When he felt the point the light touched his face. His glance was keen, his mouth was tight, and the hand he rested on the steel was bony and scarred. Sturdee was a big, gaunt Westerner, and John understood his home-town was in Colorado.

"The edges are pretty good. I got the smith to put her on the wheel," said John.

Sturdee nodded. "See what Mike's doing at the engine!"

John followed the pipe along the tunnel. By contrast with the frost above, the mine was warm, and the open lamps did not flicker much, for the air was good and the ventilation was not forced. In summer Wheeling used electric light and power, but for six months the turbine race was frozen and the dynamos did not run. Economy was studied and John had speculated about the ore. Although good copper is not found in North Ontario, the rock carried some silver and nickel. A number of processes were used to reduce the stuff,

but the electrolytic refining was put off until the ice broke.

At the top of the shaft, John stopped and looked about the engine-house. The engineer was a short, wiry Pole. His look was highly-strung and nervous; his black hair was long. At the mine they called him Mike, but John did not know his proper name. The fellow was a clever workman and a revolutionary philosopher.

"My drill's not running well; the pressure's low," said John.

"The drill is the company's," Mike rejoined in a meaning voice.

"Anyhow, the job is mine, and since I want to hold it down I must work to schedule."

Mike shrugged. "The argument is the bosses' argument. We see it is not good."

"I don't see," said John. "In a way, it's not important who owns the plant. Machines stand for saved-up labor and their proper use for general prosperity. If the country means to pay its debts, they have got to run. If you fired all the bosses, you'd soon find you hadn't got rid of the need to hustle."

"That perhaps is so; but we would hustle *for us.*"

"Oh, shucks! You make me tired. D'you think all a mine is for is to pay your wages and the company's profit?"

"I think you are not a workman," Mike said coolly.

John laughed. "I'm not an anarchist. For a long time I worked pretty hard on ore-dumps and with lumber gangs. I want the highest pay I can get, but when I get good pay I put up an honest job. You slouch and talk bad economy——"

He crossed the floor to the lean-to boiler shack and stopped in front of the gauges.

"The water's low," he resumed. "If you don't start the pump, you'll burn the furnace."

He turned and saw Ivan loafing behind the boiler. It was obvious the fellow had heard his remarks, and John wondered whether he had not been rash. His sympathy was with Wheeling, but he was not keen about plunging into a dispute.

"When you burn wood, steam goes up and down, and one must watch the fire," Mike replied. "Me, I mind the engine. If the boss wants high pressure, he must give me another man."

Harness rattled outside and Bob stood in the doorway.

"I expect Ivan wants a *soft job,*" he said, and began to throw the cordwood off his sledge.

John went down the shaft and, rejoining Sturdee, narrated his interview with Mike. He used some reserve, but Sturdee smiled, a rather grim smile.

"Did you look at the gauges?"

"I did," said John. "Steam was down."

"Water down?"

"I don't know that to watch the stoking is my business."

"It's mine," said Sturdee. "Was the water down?"

"I thought it pretty near the furnace-top," John replied.

"Keep your drill punching; I reckon you'll get pressure soon," said the foreman, and started for the shaft.

John noted his tight mouth and smiled. Before long the pipe strained and swelled with all the air he could use. When he went up for dinner he asked Bob:

"Were you about the boiler shack when Sturdee arrived?"

"I was," said Bob. "Sturdee looked at the water-glass and told Mike to start the feed-pump. Mike began to talk, but Sturdee pushed him across the floor. 'Get to your pump.'

"The pump was started and Sturdee made him fill up the fire-box. Then he said: 'I want to know why in thunder you let down steam?'

"Mike told him. For one thing, an engineer did not handle cordwood, and he wanted help. Perhaps if he'd stopped there, Sturdee would have agreed, but Mike began to talk political economy, and Ivan came from behind the boiler and butted in. I expect he was excited and forgot his job was somewhere else. Well, I couldn't follow their arguments, and don't think Sturdee tried. He threw Ivan out of the shack and let himself go. He was great! In the meantime I picked up a hefty lump of cordwood and watched Mike's hands. I imagined the block would reach him before he could pull his knife——"

Bob stopped, for Sturdee looked in at the door and signed. Bob went to the door and Sturdee asked: "What about the boss? How long d'you reckon to hold him up?"

"His eye is rather bad. I want to keep him in for a day or two."

"Then it looks as if I'd got to fix things," Sturdee remarked, and turned to John. "Get your drill going as soon as we start. We must fire the shots before we stop."

John thought Sturdee wanted to talk to Bob and went to the top of the shaft. He did not go down,

because the time allowed the men at noon had not run out. Some were dissatisfied and moody and he did not want a dispute about his breaking rules. By and by Bob arrived and threw some cordwood into the furnace.

"Hallo!" said John. "Are you looking for trouble with the boys?"

"Not at all. A fireman is allowed to work when the others stop. Sturdee has given me a new job."

"I don't see why he did so," John remarked. "The company is not extravagant."

Bob smiled. "Mike states he's an engineer and won't undertake duties that are not his. I expect Sturdee knows the fellow would get some support. Now d'you see?"

"Not altogether," John replied.

"Sometimes you're rather dull, Jake. Mike's plan was clever; he no doubt reckoned on getting one of two objects. He wanted Ivan in the engine-house, and if Sturdee agreed they would loaf, and smoke and plot another move. If Sturdee refused, he'd get up against the boys. Sturdee did not refuse; he sent me to the boiler, and a pal of Mike's has got my job in the snow. The foreman has a touch of humor?"

"He's smart," John agreed, and laughed. "But it's time you blew the whistle."

"Half a minute yet," said Bob, pulling out his watch. "I'm playing Sturdee's game."

When the whistle blew John went down the shaft and got all the pressure he needed for his drill. To some extent his work was mechanical, and while he watched the plunging bar he pondered. John knew Canada and the North-Western States, and had fol-

lowed a number of different occupations. He had driven lumberers' teams and sawmill engines, gone prospecting and worked in mines. Nobody had disputed his right to do so, but now workmen concentrated on one particular job and refused to allow outsiders to use their trade. The unions were out for high pay, specialization, shorter hours and better conditions, and John approved, although he thought their power stronger in conservative England than in the democratic West.

All the same another current ran below the surface, and John thought its silent flow sinister. North America was a white man's country and ought to be governed by American ideals; but people began to see some risk of the Americans getting submerged by the flood of immigrants. Some had escaped from grinding poverty and persecution and were frankly anarchistic revolutionaries. The American plan was to build; the others' to destroy. Perhaps the anarchists were not numerous, but one began to feel their influence. Sometimes they tried to use, and sometimes fought, the labor unions; for example, John had known them help to break a strike. Their maneuvers were often puzzling, but John did not know much about anarchist economy. The important thing was, a few of the cranks were at the mine and meant to make trouble.

The drill ran well, but the rock was hard, and John saw he could not cut the number of shot-holes the foreman wanted. He was rather annoyed about it, because the fumes of strong explosives are poisonous, and since the ventilation was primitive Sturdee's plan was to fire the blasting charges just before the men stopped in the evening. Sturdee, however, was philosophical.

"I guess we have got to wait another day. The boss may be around then," he said.

"I don't see what Mr. Wheeling's being about has got to do with it," John remarked. "If we have punched the holes at the proper spots, we'll cut the rock."

"That is so," Sturdee agreed with a dry smile. "Well, you stay with your job. You're a pretty good *driller.*"

The foreman went along the tunnel and John pondered his remark, but did not see much light. In the meantime, however, his business was to drill.

After supper Bob went to the office and changed Wheeling's bandage. His eye was bloodshot, but Bob had found some borax and imagined Wheeling would not be bothered long. When he had put on the fresh pad, Wheeling gave him a cigarette.

"Do you like it in the boilershack?"

"I like it better than I expect the other fellow likes the cordwood pile," Bob replied.

Wheeling's sound eye twinkled. "Sturdee's pretty smart. I reckon you saw his plan?"

"I thought I did so," Bob replied modestly. "All the same, I don't see why you stand for Mike."

"The Pole knows all about dynamos, and when you handle high-tension current you want to know your job. His partner, Ivan, is a hefty fellow, and for some time after I hired them I didn't find out their bughouse notions. On the whole, I've got an awkward team, but sober men won't stand for the winter at a small mine in the North. Do you and Wreay mean to stay?"

"Jake will stay until the ice breaks, and I stay with him."

Wheeling's look indicated that he was satisfied, but

he resumed: "What about my eye? It hurts pretty bad."

"Are you keen to get out?" Bob asked, for he thought Wheeling's statement significant.

"I'd sooner wait for a day or two than have trouble. If you have got a sore spot, I reckon you ought to keep out of the frost?"

"That is so," Bob agreed, and looked at Wheeling rather hard. "Well, suppose I order you to stay in your shack for three or four days?"

"I'll be resigned," said Wheeling. "If the boys are bothered about me, you can give them the bulletin."

Bob smiled. "I think I get you! I'll try to satisfy their curiosity."

He returned to the bunkhouse and stated that Wheeling would for some time keep his shack. For all that, he was persuaded that if Mike had planned to make trouble when the boss was not about, the fellow would get a jar.

VI

THE BLASTING SHOT

THE moon was on the hill and the pines glittered with frost. Between the stumps in the clearing the snow was pearly-gray, and a winding blue line marked the path to the shaft. In the background the bunkhouse windows shone, but the frost bit keen, and Bob shut the door. The cook was getting busy, and supper would soon be served.

A flickering beam and puzzling shadows played about the engine-house, for Bob had opened the furnace in order to cut the draught. He had steam enough to lower the big steel skip and bring up the men. They would come up in a few minutes, and then he must run the fan for a time to blow away the poisonous vapors the blasting shot would liberate. Although the beam from the furnace door threw a bright circle on the opposite wall, the shack for the most part was dark, and Bob, going round the boiler, struck his foot against a box. The box was thick, iron-strapped, and furnished with a good lock. It held a number of sticks of explosive and powerful detonators. Sturdee, a few minutes since, had taken out the sticks he wanted, and Bob noted that the key was in the lock.

Mike told him to get a punch and he went to a big box in a corner. The corner was dark, and he could not see into the box. Kneeling down, he began to pull the tools about, and soon afterwards felt a biting

draught touch his back, as if the door were open. When he turned his head the draught stopped, and he thought the door was shut.

Bob could not find the punch and called to Mike, who tapped something with a hammer and did not at first hear him. Then he replied impatiently that the punch was at the bottom of the box. Bob tried again, and while he felt about the box thought he heard somebody cross the floor. It was not Mike, because the hammer did not stop, and he wondered whether he was cheated. The miners wore heavy boots and the step he thought he had heard was light. Anyhow, he could not find the punch, and when he shut the box a dark shadow crossed the illuminated circle on the wall and vanished. The shadow was a man's silhouette, and Bob jumped up.

"Who's that?" he asked.

"Nobody is there," said Mike, who turned a wheel, and a pump began to throb.

Bob was persuaded he had seen somebody's shadow and thought it strange. He could not account for the fellow's entering the boiler shack, stopping for a few moments, and then going down the shaft; but since it looked as if Mike did not particularly want the punch, he resumed his occupation.

In the meantime, John scraped muddy grit from the last of the shot-holes. Sturdee had meant to fire the shot the evening before, but the holes were not ready, and he had resolved to drill an extra number and then wait until supper was ready, in order not to stop work because of the fumes. When John was satisfied the holes were clean, he got three or four men and moved the drill and stand back along the tunnel. Soon afterwards Sturdee arrrived, and they pushed giant-powder

into the holes. Giant-powder is rather like wax, and when one handles the sticks one uses caution, particularly in a mine, since a rashly-loaded shot might bring down the roof and block the tunnel. When the foreman was satisfied he looked at his watch.

"Tamp her down good. I'll pull out the boys," he said.

He went along the gallery and John began to fill the holes. The holes were deeper than the length of the powder sticks and one or two went far into the rock. John's business was to press down carefully broken stone and clay upon the explosive, in order that the shot might use its proper force and not blow out. While he was occupied one of the foreigners joined him.

"Where's my lamp?" he inquired.

John had borrowed the man's lamp, but it had gone out and he had got another.

"I reckon I hooked it on the drill before we moved her back."

"Then you want to get it, I'll wait."

John went off, although he would sooner not have left the holes until the powder was properly tamped. After he had gone a few yards, a man, coming from the shaft, pushed past, but John did not remark who the fellow was. When he reached the drill the spot was dark, and the lamp was not where he thought. He felt about but could not find it, and returned to the shot-holes.

One or two of the holes needed less tamping than he had expected, and he wondered whether a small stone had jammed and kept the material from slipping down. To experiment was risky and when he cautiously used

the rammer he saw the holes were full, and the black fuse cord indicated that the charge was underneath. John brought the ends of the fuses together for Sturdee to cut. They must time the shots to go off as nearly as possible at once. Then a number of men came out of the gallery, and Sturdee stopped by John.

"Get on a move, boys! We're waiting to touch her off," he said.

He measured and cut the fuses and John struck a smelling sulphur match. The cords hissed and sparkled, and Sturdee picked up a lamp.

"She's burning good. I guess we'll quit!"

They started, and although they did not run, they went as fast as possible. As a rule, the destructive force of giant-powder is exerted at the spot where the charge is fired and does not spread, but a narrow mine tunnel concentrates the expanding gases rather like the barrel of a gun. By and by Sturdee saw figures in the gloom ahead.

"Why are the boys stopping?" he asked.

John thought the drill and its big iron standards blocked the way. He had left room for a man to pass, but if somebody had fallen over the standards he would embarrass the others.

"Let the fellow get up!" he shouted, and instinctively jumped for a timber.

A flash behind him threw a bright reflection along the tunnel, and then all the lights went out. The rock shook, he heard heavy blocks crash and stones beat the prop behind which he crouched. In the dark men cried out as if they were struck, but their voices sounded strangely dull, and John knew his ears had

felt the savage concussion. Dust rolled along the tunnel and thick timbers cracked.

Then John braced up. The fumes of the explosive would flow towards the shaft, and if possible he must get there before they arrived. If one breathed the poison in the open air, one got a headache and nausea; in the mine, the man who breathed it and was overcome would stay where he sank down. The gas was heavy, and strongest near the ground.

He smelt something and ran a few yards. In front men fought and shouted about the drill. Some of the shouts were English, but John heard some like curses in other languages. The men knew the gas was coming, and it looked as if the foreigners meant to get over the obstacle first. There was not much room, and if they struggled John imagined nobody would get over.

He threw back a man, and then tried to get a light, for the dark was baffling. The match flickered and went out. Sturdee raged in the gloom, and his voice was like a bull's.

"Pull the fellow up! Stand back and give them room! Can't you move the blasted drill?"

John said nothing and pushed into the crowd. Men struck him and tried to drag him back, but he struggled forward and got to the machine. He thought somebody was entangled in the air-pipe and had pulled the slack coils about the tunnel. Another had fallen against the standards, and since the crowd tried to press on could not get up. To begin with, John saw he must disconnect the pipe; then he might perhaps unship one of the massive iron legs. The trouble was, he could not see and could not make the men understand his plan. They smelt the gas and meant to reach the shaft.

"Try to get through, Boss. I want you here," he shouted.

Sturdee arrived and saw what they must do. The foreman was muscular and quick, but John's head ached and he was getting faint. The fumes had reached him and the struggling crowd jammed him against the machine. Another began to help, but John doubted if they could clear a passage before they were overcome. Then clean cold air flowed round him, and he knew somebody had started the fan full-speed.

The draught was bracing, his grasp got firmer and the pipe-union turned. The pipe dropped from the machine, and he pulled a half-conscious man from the coils. Then Sturdee unshipped a standard, the drill fell over, and the men, pushing past, threw John against the wall. He let them go, and Sturdee helped him to the bottom of the shaft. The skip was going up, and the roll of wheels indicated that it carried a heavy load. They must wait in the dark until it came down and John heard others move about with keen impatience.

A pulley-wheel rattled, a wire rope clanged, and the big steel bucket jarred at the bottom of the shaft. Somebody pushed John over the rim, the air got keener, and he knew they were going up. At the top, Sturdee helped him out, and he sat down on the floor of the engine-house. The furnace door was shut, but the beam from a small lamp touched Bob's face. His brows were knit and his mouth was firm; John thought he held the wheel that controlled the fan. It looked as if Bob had given them air that drove back the poison fumes. Then John's head swam and he knew nothing more.

A minute or two afterwards he was conscious that

Bob stooped over him and Sturdee stood close by. His side and arm hurt, and he imagined the poison he had breathed did not altogether account for his slackness. He had used savage efforts, and the struggling men had thrown him against the machine and the rock. Anyhow, the faintness was going and he got up.

"Feeling better?" Sturdee asked.

John nodded and looked about. "Where's Mike?"

"I booted him off the engine; Bob handled her. Did you put in extra powder when you tamped the holes?"

"Certainly not. I hadn't another stick," said John sharply, for now he was able to think about it, he knew the powder the foreman had used did not account for the violent explosion.

"Did you leave your job?"

John narrated his going for the lamp and meeting a man in the dark.

"Sure!" said Sturdee in a meaning voice. "Well, I reckon the man you met got busy while you were away and the other, who sent you, knew you wouldn't find the lamp."

"It looks like that; I begin to see a light," Bob interposed, and began to talk about the footsteps and the shadow on the wall.

When he stopped Sturdee sent him for the powder-box and counted the sticks of dynamite.

"So far as I can reckon up, we're some sticks short," he said. "The boys who fixed the thing are surely smart."

John agreed. When the plotters overloaded the shot-holes they had risked something, but had not the drill blocked the way they would, no doubt, have reached

the shaft before the dangerous charge exploded. Then dynamite is not very expensive, and as a rule one was not careful to count the sticks one took from the magazine. It was possible nobody would find out some was gone.

"In the meantime the fellows have started for the bunkhouse, and you are leaving them alone," Bob remarked.

"That's so," said Sturdee, with a grim smile. "I don't know them yet and I've got to wait. I guess they fixed their program and expect to put it over: They'll talk to the boys like this: miners ought not to stand for the company's firing a risky shot, and they have no use for a blasted foreman who doesn't know the proper charge. They're not going to be blown up and poisoned to help the bosses' profits. Well, when they're through I'll do some talking."

He ordered Bob to bank the fire and went out with John. The frost was keen, the moon was bright, and John noted the foreman's stern calm. Calm was indicated, because it was plain the foreigners meant to work upon the miners' prejudices. In fact, John saw a risk of their carrying the men away. Much depended on Sturdee's striking the proper note, and when they reached the bunkhouse John pulled himself together. His head ached, his side and his arm hurt and he was dull, but he meant to see the foreman out.

VII

WHEELING'S RECOVERY

WHEN John went into the bunkhouse a group by the stove was engaged in noisy talk. Ivan occupied the middle of the group and his excited voice dominated the others, but John did not hear his remarks. A number of men were talking, and the cook threw tin plates on the table. John rather thought Li Wan meant to make a noise.

Tobacco smoke drifted about the house, and black drops that smelt of tar dripped from a joint in the stove-pipe near the roof. A man had got some hot water, and two or three stood about the basin, bathing their cut faces. One or two more occupied the bench along the wall, and their poses indicated that they were hurt or ill. John noted with ironical amusement that Ivan's forehead was marked by a large red bruise. He imagined Ivan had not reckoned on getting a nasty knock, and his hurt to some extent accounted for his violence.

When Sturdee came in the talkers stopped, and one or two pushed Ivan forward. Ivan however, did not hesitate and signing his supporters back with a theatrical gesture, fronted Sturdee. The foreman was not theatrical; he rather looked bored.

"Well?" he said.

"The boys have had enough," Ivan began. "They have no use for being exploited by rich jobbers in mine-

stock. They don't get no dividends, but their bodies are theirs——"

He paused and two or three shouted approval. Sturdee smiled.

"I've heard something like that before. Anyhow, I want to eat and you don't like it when the hash gets cold. After supper you can talk."

The Chinaman served the meal, and for about ten minutes all were occupied. Then Sturdee pushed away his plate and beat on the table with the handle of his knife.

"Sit right where you are, boys. Ivan will take the floor."

Ivan got up and threw back his long, black hair. His eyes sparkled excitedly, and his nervous glance searched the room.

"We have had enough; our bodies are all we got. By our sweat the company is rich, but now, to save a few dollars, the bosses want our blood. A low-pay laborer runs the boiler, the ventilation is bad, and they fire a risky shot because a large shot is cheap. But we have had enough, and now we stop. Before we go down again the mine must be safe."

"I want to get this straight," said Sturdee. "Do you *all* stop?"

John studied the men and thought a number hesitated, although it was plain Ivan could count on strong support.

"We are out for safety," one replied.

"Very well. If you state your proposition, we'll see what the boss thinks."

"The boss is going blind," a foreigner remarked.

"He can *hear* all right," said Sturdee. "I'll send for him. Ivan holds the floor."

The cook went out and a few minutes afterwards Wheeling arrived. His bandage was gone and his eye was rather bloodshot, but this was all. He put a book and a wallet on the table and stood at the end. It was obvious that Ivan and one or two others would sooner he had stayed away.

"You were talking," he said to Ivan. "Now you can go ahead; I'll weigh your arguments."

Ivan resumed, and John thought his arguments clever, although he rather addressed the men than Wheeling. He exaggerated their just complaints, and claimed that the parsimonious company, by refusing them proper ventilation, tools and lighting, risked their lives. Economy, he declared, must not be used at the workman's cost, and unless a number of improvements he indicated were carried out they would not go down the shaft. One saw that for the most part the others agreed, and when Ivan stopped, Wheeling knitted his brows and was quiet for a moment or two. Fronting the angry men he looked very young, and John thought he knew that to strike a false note would tip the beam against him.

"Well," he said, "your leader's argument is plausible and part is sound. At Kamistaqua we have not got the machinery they use at the big Superior mines. When you sink a shaft back from the railroad modern fixings can't be got. For all that, I claim Kamistaqua's as good and safe a mine as any in the wilds. I reckon a number of you know this.

"Anyhow, when transport costs are high, refining a

low-grade ore is not a paying proposition, and if you closed down the mine, I don't know that the bosses would bother much. They own some richer mineral properties. Now it certainly looks as if you could close down the mine——"

"You allow the bosses won't put up the money to fix things as we want?" one inquired.

"You have got it!" said Wheeling dryly. "The company pays standard wages, but we stop there. The profits won't stand for our using an expensive plant, and if you're not satisfied you must quit. But you want to weigh this—there's nothing much doing while the snow's on the ground."

His statement carried weight. In Canada, for the most part, outside work is stopped when the snow begins to fall, and men wait, at dollar-hotels and cheap boarding-houses, for the thaw. Shafts and tunnels do not freeze, but when work on the surface is awkward there is less employment underground. Some of the miners looked thoughtful, and some began to growl angrily. To let Wheeling persuade the hesitaters was not their plan.

Wheeling stopped them. "I let Ivan talk and I claim a square deal. To begin with, I reckon you'll allow Sturdee knows his job and I know mine. Ivan states we're slack, and in order to save a few dollars we let you run a risk. He says we fired a dangerous shot because a big shot is cheap. Well, the shot has blocked the tunnel and smashed an expensive machine: you are miners and can figure out the bill. The Kamistaqua's run on a narrow margin, and when working costs eat up the margin I lose my job. D'you think I'm going to run a risk that will get me fired?"

Some obviously did not think so, and John saw Wheeling gained ground. He thought Ivan's friends saw this, for Mike interrupted:

"Soft talk, because soft talk pays? He's the capitalists' servant, boys, and so long as he holds you down, he won't get fired."

"If you know capitalists willing to back a man who squanders their dollars, I do not," Wheeling rejoined with a laugh. "Anyhow, if you want hard talk, it's coming to you. Ivan claims the trouble sprang from the company's greed and Sturdee's carelessness. It did not, and you got stung. Ivan and his partners, at your risk, played a crooked game; I'm going to *show* you——"

"Cut it out!" one shouted. "What's he think he's giving us? Talk like that makes me tired!"

He got some encouragement, for the most part from the foreigners. A number of the others looked irresolute and some obviously agreed with Wheeling. Two or three began to argue, and then one said, "We'll hear the boss. He's not through yet."

"I am through," said Wheeling, and signed to Bob. "Get up and tell them——"

Bob talked about the powder-box and the shadow on the wall, but when he got near the end of his narrative, a man interrupted him.

"You say *you* started the fan?"

"Why, of course! When I felt the shock in the boiler-house I knew the explosion was extra violent and something was wrong. It was plain I must give you air to blow away the fumes."

The miner nodded. "Where was Mike when you were doing that?"

"I don't know, and didn't bother to find out. He was certainly not at the fan control."

The Pole got up and began to shout excitedly, but a miner pulled him down.

"Have we got it all, Boss?" he asked.

"Nearly all," said Wheeling, and indicated John. "Jake will tell you something."

John narrated his leaving the shot-holes to get the lamp and afterwards finding some he thought he had not filled were full. When he stopped Wheeling smiled.

"That's all, boys! I guess I've put you wise."

"Sure thing! The blasted anarchist has played us!" one agreed, and another asked: "What are you going to do about it, Boss?"

"To begin with, I'll try to meet one or two of your claims, so far as I think the company can stand for the bill," said Wheeling quietly. Then he indicated two or three of the foreigners. "Come to the table!"

Ivan, Mike and two others advanced unwillingly, and Wheeling opened the book he had brought.

"The company owes you——" he resumed and stated the sums after he called the names. Then he pulled a roll of bills from the wallet. "Take your money and light out!"

"The deal's square. Let them go," remarked an American miner.

"At sun-up, perhaps we start," said Ivan, sullenly. "One must make one's pack and put up grub."

"You'll start *now*," Wheeling rejoined. "The moon's good and the teamster will haul your truck on the bob-sled; I want some supplies from the settlement." He turned to the others. "All who are not

satisfied had better pull out, and I'll grub-stake the lot. The sledge starts in half an hour."

Nobody was keen to go and a big Canadian laughed. "Looks as if we meant to stay. You have put it over, Boss!"

When the sledge lurched down the river bank Wheeling took Bob to his office, and got him to bathe and bandage his eye. Then he pulled out a packet of cigarettes.

"Ivan's gone," he said. "I feel I'd like a smoke."

Bob sympathized with Wheeling, whom he thought had borne some strain, and when he had lighted his cigarette the manager resumed: "At the beginning, I doubted if I could carry the boys along. Their mood was ugly, but you and Jake played up."

"Oh, well," said Bob, "I think John felt you were entitled to a square deal, but since you pay standard wages, I don't altogether see Ivan's object."

Wheeling knitted his brows. "The fellow's an anarchist crank and thinks his business is to get up against his boss. Perhaps this accounts for much. Then I imagine he belongs to a revolutionary gang that saw their chance at the big Western strike. If that's so, I can understand his having a pick on the company. My bosses run a mine where the trouble was and helped break the strike. Some of the powder and gasolene gang went to jail, and one or two got shot. Well, you see, if they were pals of Ivan's——"

Bob saw, and thought Wheeling lucky because the men were gone.

"Are fellows of his sort numerous in North America?" he asked.

"We have got enough," said Wheeling. "Before I

was a mine boss, I'd some romantic notions. My country was a sure refuge for the oppressed; we were a strong and generous people, ready to take all who came, teach them American ideals, and make them useful citizens. Now I don't know. Looks as if the country were getting filled up by poor foreign trash. They bring fresh problems, and we have big problems we haven't solved. Sometimes I wonder whether we should sweep up the lot and fire them out——"

Bob had heard something like this before. He imagined thoughtful men whose traditions were American had begun to look ahead and ask where they were going. Cheap labor that lowered the country's standards had some drawbacks.

"Are you talking about Canada, or the United States?" he inquired.

Wheeling smiled. "You want to forget the frontier; the line's imaginary. We have not a fort and not a gun all the way along. If you crossed in the dark by a prairie trail, in the morning you'd be puzzled to find out if you were in Manitoba or Dakota, Montana or Saskatchewan. Maybe I would know, but you would not. We talk like you, you build like us, and, for the most part, our rules are yours. You use our money. When you get your pay-roll you'll get some American bills and you'll find they go at the stores. Ours is the older country and we have pushed ahead, but what America thinks to-day Canada will think to-morrow——"

He lighted a fresh cigarette and resumed: "Well, I'm not a politician. My job's to smelt copper and develop the Kamistaqua lode, for a pretty mean combine."

"I suppose your employers are mean? Anyhow, they're not extravagant."

"In America, *mean* does not altogether imply parsimony; shabbiness gets near the mark. However, I don't want to growl about my bosses. So long as I take their pay, I put across their job."

"Oh well," said Bob, "I've stayed some time, and want to mend my clothes."

He went off, and when he had sewed his overalls got into his bunk. The men had gone to theirs and the house was quiet. Bob heard the stove snap and the draught in the pipe. Sometimes a sleeping miner murmured, and Bob wondered where his dreams had carried him. Then he began to think about the men who pushed on in the moonlight down the frozen river.

He pictured the horses trampling the snow and the thin cloud of steam that floated round their heads, the gliding sledge and the faint blue track it left. A man walked by the team, the others went behind, keeping the broken trail; their figures were dark against the snow, and the outlines blurred by their shaggy caps and skin coats. Although the frost was bitter, they were going South, and in a few days would reach the settlement. Then one could travel where one would on board the warm cars; to crowded, glittering cities and open-water ports from which the ocean liners sailed.

Bob saw the dark figures go round a bend and then the moonlight got dim. The picture melted and another began to grow, for the wings of dreams are swifter than the rocking cars. The river now sparkled in the sun and blue shadows trailed across the English fells. Bob saw the bright green larches and smelled wild hyacinths, for he was back at Allerdale, in the Old Country.

VIII

THE SLEDGE-TEAM

AFTER breakfast one morning Wheeling stopped John, who had started for the shaft.

"You stated you were a prospector, and a prospector's a useful man on the trail. D'you think you could make the settlement in pretty good time?"

"Do you want me to go?" John inquired.

"The cook's stores are getting short and the boys won't stand for our cutting down rations. I expected the teamster to get through some days since with fresh supplies, but Sandy has not arrived and I'm bothered."

John nodded. Men isolated in the snowy wilds are moody and make much of small grievances; moreover when the cold is Arctic one needs generous food.

"Perhaps you ought to send another man," he said. "Bob and I recently rather helped you out, and I'd sooner the boys didn't think you rewarded me by a job they'd like."

"They'd certainly like it at the settlement," Wheeling replied with a twinkle. "When they got loafing about the saloon they might want to stay, like Sandy. When you have loaded up I reckon you'll start. Well, you can take your partner and get off when you're ready."

John and Bob started at noon, with a hand-sledge to carry their blankets, an axe, a small tent, and food. The snow was loose, but the sledge was light, and for

three days they made good progress down the frozen river. Then, when they pitched camp behind a clump of junipers one night, snow began to fall, and John braced the tent across the shelter he had built. The tent was a ridge-pole tent, and they used it for a roof.

A snapping fire occupied one side of the camp, and after supper Bob, with the canvas overhead and a wall of branches behind him, was nearly warm. He thought it strange, but he could loaf and smoke in some comfort, although had not John pitched camp he would have run a risk of freezing. When one takes the snowy trail one must know the North, for without good shelter flesh and blood cannot front the Arctic cold.

Blue smoke rolled about the junipers; small pine trunks stood out and vanished. The fire leaped up and sank, and behind the blaze snowflakes tossed. The tent strained and the branches bent, but Bob, lying on a pile of twigs, was languidly content. They had made a good march and until daybreak he could rest.

"How long do you mean to stay with Wheeling, Jake?" he asked. "You have pretty thoroughly studied his plans, and I know as much about copper mining as I want to know."

"A month after the ice breaks and the dynamos start we'll quit."

"A month after?" Bob remarked. "Do you imagine Wheeling will allow you to study the electrolytic process?"

"It's possible he will not. All mines are not run for the shareholders, and sometimes directors get rich by jobbing the stock at the Board of Trade. The value of the stock depends on the value of the concentrates, and

when you know the metal the ore carries and others do not, you stand to win the game. Then at Kamistaqua I imagine the silver, and perhaps the nickel, is worth much, as is Wheeling's plan for refining the stuff. My notion is, he'll fix things so each man knows his job but not another's. All the same, I'm going to find out the reactions he uses at the vats."

"You're thorough, Jake. Well, suppose you do find out and are able to use Wheeling's process at Alice's mine?"

"I'll clear off all debts on the estate, rebuild the farmsteads, and make proper roads and drains. We'll dry out waterlogged soil, use high-grade cultivation, and, if my luck's good, make Ruthwaite prosperous."

"But what then? When you have mended Alice's fortune, your job is gone."

"Ah!" said John, "for some way my road is plain and I must go ahead. Then it stops and I can't see——"

He turned and studied the blurred trunks that loomed and vanished in the smoke. His brows were knit and his mouth was tight.

"I don't know yet," he resumed, and began to fill his pipe.

Bob said nothing. He knew where to stop, and presently went to sleep. When he awoke in the morning, it was snowing hard. His watch indicated that day had broken, but except for the fire he saw no light. One could hardly distinguish the junipers around the camp. When they cooked breakfast John frowned.

"The snow's pretty fierce, but I reckon I can hit the wagon-trail," he said. "If we stop or if we start, we run some risk."

After three days in the frozen wilds Bob had frankly had enough. He had not thought the settlement an attractive spot, but now he owned its charm. The bleak and dirty hotel called.

"Then I think we'll start," he replied.

They set off, and for an hour or two Bob hauled the sledge. Day broke, but the light that pierced the snow was dim and Bob wondered whether John knew where they went. On the whole he doubted. They had left the river and now pushed through thin bush, but this was all he knew. The trees were indistinct and melted in the tossing flakes. His fur cap and coat got heavy, his feet sank, and the sledge dragged in the loose snow. At length John stopped.

"Looks as if we had got to pack the load," he said. "We're losing time and I'd like to make the loggers' old camp in the afternoon."

Bob did not want to leave the sledge. So far, it had helped them to transport objects they needed when they camped. He knew he could not carry his proper half of the load; something must be thrown away, and the choice was hard. Pulling off his mittens he got to work, but his hands were numb and he fumbled awkwardly with the straps and cords. At length he got a large bundle on his back and they resumed the march.

They did not stop at noon. One could not stop in the driving snow and Bob began to think about the loggers' shack. The gang had gone down river, but the bunks they had used were filled with dry swamp-hay, and one could make a fire. Bob was tired and cold, and to think he could rest and sleep behind thick log walls was comforting. He pushed on, but his pack had got very heavy, and he let John break the trail. For some time

he had imagined one strap galled him worse than the other, and at length he stopped and threw off his load.

The blanket was partly unrolled and an end hung loose. Bob was bothered by a horrible doubt, and kneeling in the snow, began to open the bundle. His hands shook, and in a few moments his doubts were justified. The most part of their food had fallen out and was lost. He tried to brace up, for he had got a nasty jolt. John had stopped a few yards off, but when he saw Bob's strained look he joined him and glanced at the open pack. His look was very grim.

"I expect you don't know when you dropped the pack?"

"I don't know, but I imagine it was an hour or two since. Is there any use in going back?"

John indicated the tossing snow. "The parcel's buried and I doubt if I could find our tracks. The food I've got may last two meals, and we can't make the settlement to-morrow night."

Bob knew John did not exaggerate; in fact, his calm statement was ironically humorous. Bob himself might struggle through the snow until dark, but he must stop then. To talk about his reaching the settlement was as useful as to talk about his reaching Montreal.

"Well?" he said, in a hoarse voice.

"Our plan's to head for the loggers' new camp."

"But we haven't reached the trail to the other camp, and you don't know where the gang has gone?"

"We have *crossed* the trail," John said quietly. "I began to think we had done so some time since, but didn't want to bother you. The new camp is near the river and we'll presently hit the ice."

Bob said nothing. If the camp was far off he could not reach it, but John did not know how far it was and there was no use in speculating. He must push on while he could and trust his luck.

He got very tired. The snow was deep and his load weighed him down. Sometimes he thought he would throw the pack away, but if they did not find the camp the thick blanket might, perhaps, keep him alive until morning. He doubted if John could make a fire, and knew he himself could not. In the meantime he must keep going.

By and by he was dully conscious that they were on the ice. The surface was level and the trees were some yards off. Stumbling along mechanically, he followed John. Sometimes he dropped back, and sometimes by a stern effort regained the distance he had lost. He durst not let the indistinct figure plodding on in front go out of sight.

It got dark and John, going slower, now and then looked about. He broke the trail, and to follow his track was easier than floundering in untrodden snow; but Bob came near to feeling that if John went ahead and left him alone he would be resigned. Although to stop meant to freeze, the effort to keep up was horrible.

At length John swerved and headed quickly for the bank. Bob called out in feeble protest, and John waited and pulled him up the slope. At the top, Bob's heart beat, for he saw in front a dim square mass, from one end of which the butts of logs stuck out. Behind the mass was a gap in the forest, and he knew John had found the trail to the camp. A deep groove in the snow indicated that the lumberers had recently hauled the logs to the pile on the bank.

They pushed on, and Bob found it soothing to follow a well-marked trail. Now he knew where he went, although he did not know how far, and he began to get his courage back. By and by he saw a light. The light was clear and for a few moments Bob was puzzled. Then he was dully conscious that the snow had stopped.

John shoved open the door of a log shack, and when they went in men got up from the benches. Some threw down old newspapers and some dropped greasy cards. John was white, like a polar bear, and began to beat the snow from his skin coat. Bob leaned slackly against the door-post.

"Hallo!" said a big lumber-jack. "Where are you from?"

"Kamistaqua forks," John replied. "We durstn't stop to noon. Can you give us some supper?"

"Why, certainly! If you made it in the snow, you're some bushman!"

"When did the snow stop?" Bob inquired.

"About two hours since. Anyhow, come in and shut the blamed door."

Bob pulled off his pack, and dropping his coat on the boards, went shakily to a bench.

"I don't know you yet, boys, but I haven't met another gang I was so glad to see," he said.

The loggers laughed and one or two began to put food on the table. After he had satisfied his appetite, John and the foreman talked about lumbering. For the most part, the foreman stated, the pines were small and hardly paid for cutting, but he had recently struck a pocket of useful timber.

"When I put the company wise they sent the organizing boss, but he's gone to the settlement to wire for

another gang and some truck I want," he said. "If you go on in the morning, I'll send a man along to see when the boys are coming and bring out our new team."

"Have you bought a new team?"

"The boss picked up a span of horses. I haven't seen them, but he allowed he'd got a snap."

Bob knew to get a *snap* implies to buy a good thing cheap, and he looked up sharply, but John gave him a meaning glance.

"Where did your boss buy the team?"

"At the settlement, about a week since."

"Oh well," said John, "we must pull out at daybreak and we'll take your man."

They started in the morning, and after a laborious journey reached the settlement. When they got there they went to the hotel stable and saw Wheeling's team, which, a lounger stated, belonged to the loggers. Bob and John returned to the dining-room and joined the landlord and another by the stove.

"I expect you're Mr. Stetson, of the Lumber Company?" John remarked.

The other nodded. He was a young man and his look was keen and frank. John thought he knew, and approved, his type.

"That's so. I suppose you're from the mine? Saw you going to the stable. What d'you think about my new team?"

"I think you got stung," John replied with a smile.

Stetson looked surprised. "The team's all right. I know something about horses."

"The horses are sound and good haulers," John agreed, and turned to the landlord, whom he thought interested. "The Kamistaqua boys stopped with you.

I expect you know Sandy. Did he sell the horses?"

"Mike, the foreigner, sold the horses. He stated Boss Wheeling sent him down to trade them. Wheeling hadn't much use for a team in winter, and feed was running out."

"But you knew Sandy was teamster."

"Sandy was drunk. When they got in, the others filled him up and kept him full. I had to let them; they were an ugly crowd and I didn't want trouble."

"Anyhow, I bought the horses," Stetson declared.

"We'll talk about this in a minute," said John, who asked the landlord: "Did Sandy go with the boys?"

"They took him. Sandy reckoned he was for the mine, but when the boys went out on the West-bound they put him on the cars. The agent allowed he said he'd see his friends in Toronto and then come back."

"In Toronto?" Bob interrupted. "You stated the train went West?"

"That's so. Sandy had sure got on a jag," said the landlord dryly.

John gave him a thoughtful glance. "The boys' tale was, Wheeling had ordered them to sell the horses. When they went off and took the teamster, didn't you see a light? Since they were not going back to Kamistaqua, Wheeling wouldn't get his money."

The landlord smiled. "The crook who beats me must play a smarter game than that! I'm an hotelkeeper. When Mr. Stetson paid for the team, Mike asked for an envelope. He shoved the bills inside and gave the envelope to me. 'That's for the boss,' he said. 'Keep it until he sends for it.'"

He got up, went to his safe, and came back with a large envelope.

"You can take it to Mr. Wheeling. The wad's inside."

"I doubt it," said John, and opened the envelope. Then he pulled out a piece of folded newspaper and added with a twinkle: "Looks as if Mike *had* played you."

The landlord's face went red. "The blasted anarchist surely played me! Anyhow, I'm not the only sucker; he got your boss."

"I rather think he got Mr. Stetson," John rejoined.

Stetson looked up sharply. "Do you claim the team is yours?"

"It certainly was ours. I imagine the proper owner is entitled to recover stolen property, and your plan is to catch the thief. Since I don't start for two days, you can telegraph your office."

"That's so," said Stetson, who pulled out his watch. "I want to send our people a night-letter anyhow, and I'll give the operator the stuff."

He went off to the station and John smiled. "I expect the company's lawyer will advise him he must let the horses go."

IX

THE ICE BREAKS

JOHN returned to the mine with the team and a load of supplies, and when the next party went to the settlement Sandy arrived. His face was pinched, and he was thin and obviously ashamed. Sturdee took him to the office and sent for John.

"Why have you come back?" Wheeling asked the teamster.

Sandy hesitated. He was a big, good-humored and rather dull fellow.

"I couldn't hit a job, and I felt lonesome without my horses."

"The horses were the company's and you let Mike sell them."

"Anyhow, I drove the team and they knew me. I reckoned you'd get them back from the lumber man. Besides, I was very drunk, Boss; I guess I was doped."

Wheeling looked at Sturdee, and John saw the foreman agreed. John himself thought Sandy's embarrassed statement sincere. He had known teamsters in the woods to whom their horses were like human friends; moreover the bushman is firmly persuaded that a small quantity of cigar ash, dropped into strong liquor, will poison one's body and dull one's brain. John had not experimented, but he was satisfied Sandy had been drugged.

"Where did the boys take you on the cars?" Wheeling resumed.

Sandy told a romantic tale. The others hoisted him to the upper sleeping board in a Colonist car and this was all he knew about the journey, but late at night the train stopped at a big station. Mike pulled him out and took him to a workman's hotel, and in the morning he found his door was locked and his water-jug was empty. John knew this was possible, because at some dollar-hotels one must carry water for oneself.

After a time Ivan brought Sandy some liquor. Sandy did not want breakfast, but he did want a drink and he drained the glass. He went to sleep, and in the afternoon Ivan and two foreigners came to his room. The strangers talked, and Sandy imagined he agreed to go with the party to Alberta. One said he had got a soft job for him, and he had better pull out because Wheeling would put the police on his track. Sandy stated that he had not until then altogether understood that Mike had stolen the team.

In the evening he got downstairs, and when he sat by the stove a man he had not yet seen joined the group. Sandy thought the fellow looked disturbed, but he presently went off with the others. Sandy went to bed, and in the morning the landlord told him his partners had got on board the West-bound train. He stated that had they not gone, he would have put them out; he did not want a gang like that in his house.

Sandy afterwards hung about Port Arthur and Fort William, but now the lake was frozen and navigation stopped nothing much was doing, and when his money was nearly gone he resolved to return and risk Wheeling's hiring him again.

When Sandy stopped, Wheeling tried to get some light about Ivan's plans. Sandy rather thought the gang were looking for trouble in Alberta, and had some kind of pick on Wheeling, but this was all.

"Very well," said Wheeling, "you can go back to your team, but if you give the boys any fool talk about anarchists you'll get fired for good."

Sandy went off and Wheeling, picking up a Montreal newspaper, lighted a cigarette.

"The gang were going to Lethbridge," he remarked. "It's obvious they did not expect to get a job. The *Star* states a big labor dispute has begun in the neighborhood. Looks as if Ivan's partners knew before the dispute started."

"It's possible," Sturdee agreed. "Where there's trouble a crowd like that would get their chance."

"But what was their object for taking Sandy?" John asked.

"Their object for getting him away from the settlement is plain; so long as he couldn't talk I might not find out about my horses," Wheeling replied. "Then Sandy's a big strong fellow but not very bright. I guess they thought they could use him, until they got a scare at Fort William and lit out."

"Looks like that," Sturdee remarked. "Sandy allowed they had a pick on you!"

Wheeling knitted his brows. "I reckoned they were up against the *company,* but perhaps their spite is personal. When the company broke the big strike in the West, the mob tried to wreck our boiler-house, but I'd got a hint and sent for the town-reeve, a citizens' vigilante club, and the North-West police. Well, the

mob left some men on the ground, and two or three were dead——"

"The company gives you some awkward posts," said John.

"The bosses knew what was coming to them, and the president stated if I could hold the mine I'd get a softer job," Wheeling replied with a dry smile. "Well, I did hold the mine, and they sent me to Kamistaqua!" He turned to Sturdee. "Do you think we have weeded out the gang?"

Sturdee looked thoughtful. "I wouldn't bet. You can't weed out all the foreigners, and some are useful men. Anyhow, things go wrong. I know something about mining tools and timber, but I'm puzzled——"

"The ice ought to break before long and our electric plant is not fool-proof," said Wheeling, and asked John: "Do you know much about turbines and dynamos?"

John said he had driven the machines, and Wheeling's smile indicated satisfaction.

Then I'll give you control at the power-house, and Bob can help. The job carries higher pay."

John thanked Wheeling and presently went off, but he was not altogether satisfied. He wanted to study the refining process at the electrolytic vats, where the current separated the copper and other metals from the acid solution. He, however, would supply the current, and might find some grounds for going to the vats. The turbines would not start for perhaps a month, and he must think about a plan.

When he came up from the mine one evening the snow stuck to his boots. As a rule the snow was dry

and loose, but now it was soft and the surface was honeycombed. By contrast with the biting cold he had long borne, the air was warm, and he liked its damp touch on his skin. Winter was going, but was not gone, and would for a time, perhaps, renew its rigors. At daybreak a North wind sprang up and bent the roaring pines, and when dark fell the path from the mine was buried deep in dry snow. The fine powder sifted like dust into the boiler-house, and when Bob banked his furnace he swept from the floor drifts that did not melt. For all that, his heart was light; spring was not far off, and his labors would soon be finished.

Two or three weeks afterwards, he went one evening up the river bank with John. The snow was wet: in places it had gone, and the stiff, black pines cut against a checkered background. One smelled sweet resinous scents, and the air was soft. Bob's mood was strangely tranquil. His body was relaxing after the long strain, his hands were supple, and he felt as if his blood at length coursed freely. All the same, he longed for the Old Country. At Ruthwaite the sun was shining. West winds roared up the dale, and in sheltered spots, the larches put on their glowing green.

A short distance from the mine, a tributary stream leaped from a cliff, and John stopped at the bottom of the fall. Not long since the rocks were covered by frozen spray that looked like sculptured draperies. Now the thick mass had broken and the angry cataract plunged from ledge to ledge. The power-house occupied a hollow in the crag, and a big pipe went up to the flume that brought the water from a higher level. The evening was calm, but the ice on the river cracked, and strange noises rolled down the valley. Some-

times the noise was like quick rifle-shots and sometimes like heavy blasting.

Bob sat down on a pine-stump and lighted his pipe. He had brought John from the bunkhouse because he wanted to talk.

"It's thawing fast. Wheeling will start the turbines soon," he said.

"The ice is ready to break," John agreed. "In the morning I must get the key and try the valves."

"When the dynamos run Wheeling will turn the current on the vats. He has a good quantity of raw metal to refine."

"That is so," John said quietly.

Bob gave him a keen glance. He did not yet know John's plans, but was persuaded he would not leave the mine until all were carried out. This was important, because Bob did not want to stay.

"I think you ought to go back soon. I got a letter from Alice, and she rather hints that you are needed."

"I got a letter from Alice. She did not indicate anything like that."

Bob smiled. "It's possible. You don't know much about young women, Jake. Anyhow, I imagine you don't know Alice. Well, you have found out all you can find out about reducing copper ore, except the final process."

"Yes. I have got to find out how Wheeling separates the silver and nickel.

"Exactly!" said Bob. "How do you mean to do so? And will you be long? You see, it's some time since you left Allerdale, and I doubt if Hugh has kept all straight. Then I have frankly had enough."

"I want another month. If I'm not satisfied then, it will be because Wheeling has fired me out. I must get round the vats. Sometimes electric cables leak; you want to watch the insulation and look out for short-circuits."

"Wheeling's not at all a fool," Bob remarked meaningly. "If there's a secret about the process he uses, I don't think your chance of studying it is particularly good."

"If I can't get at the vats, I'll try Wheeling's safe. He, no doubt, locks up the silver and nickel and I can see the quantity he gets. Then I expect he records the strength of the current and acid solution, and perhaps the chemical reactions."

Bob gave him a surprised glance and laughed. "Well, I knew your resolution! There's another thing. Wheeling's a good sort and perhaps to steal his plans is shabby."

"To use his plans in England won't hurt Wheeling," John replied. "I'm not stealing another's invention; there's so to speak, not much mystery about electrolyzing copper. Yet some valuable metals combined with it are elusive. When you reduce the stuff they combine in fresh alloys, and I've grounds to imagine Wheeling has solved problems we are up against at Ruthwaite. The important thing is, his plant is small. We know the big Lake Superior smelters, but their methods won't go at Ruthwaite, unless we can raise a capital of a hundred thousand pounds. At Kamistaqua all is done on a reduced scale; they can't ship out roasted ore to a smelter on the railroad because transport's expensive, but if Wheeling's tiny

furnaces pay, something of the sort ought to pay at Ruthwaite——"

He stopped and Bob looked up, for the ice cracked with a noise like a battery of heavy guns. The gray-white surface worked and strange hollow echoes rolled down the valley. In front of the power-house worn rocks enclosed a pool, and its open center looked black as ink. Thin mist drifted about the gap and the dark water began to toss in angry waves. The noise got louder and a distant uproar throbbed across the trees. Bob thrilled and looked at John. The din was like nothing he had heard before.

"What is it, Jake?"

"The ice is breaking! Sometimes it gets away quietly; sometimes it does not. Depends on the channel and the slope of the divide. I expect the melted snow has filled a headwater's lake and the flood's coming down."

The angry gap in the frozen pool was wider. Big floes cracked off, spun in the eddies and shocked. Then the ice below the eddies split up and slipped away, and for a few moments the channel was occupied by leaping water. Upstream, the ice bent and rose at the middle. The working mass broke and moved with startling speed. Smashed floes and battered pines plunged in a turmoil of foam. The blocks looked gray against the foam, and some carried soil and heavy stones. They revolved, tilted, capsized, rebounded from the rocks, and went thundering down the rapids. The noise was tremendous, and Bob thought the stiff pines shook. His body quivered and he was conscious of a strange nervous excitement.

But it was nearly dark, and he was cold. He got up and they started for the mine.

"The thing's daunting. When you're fronted by primitive forces unloosed like this, you feel man's efforts don't count for much. If I was near the railroad, I'd watch for the Atlantic express. To see the big cars roll by would sooth me."

John smiled. "The Kamistaqua breaks up *tame*. I've known the ice rub out a forest and grind the rocks in the rapids level. In the North, Nature's boss."

"So far?"

"So far; not for good. Man's a conquering animal; his part's protagonist. The North American's up against Nature, and he's got to win."

"Man needs warmth and food and can't get much in the wilds. Nature drowns and freezes your rash prospectors."

"They go alone and run steep risks," said John. "Some day they'll go in gangs, with a railroad coming on behind them to carry tools and supplies. Then they'll harness the forces that now destroy them to bore the rocks for metals and warm the cities they build. Give us lumber and iron, and we'll break the wilderness——" He stopped and resumed with a laugh: "In the meantime, my job's to get busy and start the Kamistaqua turbines."

X

THE POWER-HOUSE

IT was getting dark in the power-house, and John put on his coat. He had for some hours been occupied at a turbine, but now the cover was bolted down and he thought all was ready to start.

"Wheeling wants a trial run in the morning. Pull round the belt," he said.

Bob was tired and greasy, but he knew John would not go until he was satisfied. Getting up on a tool-box he seized the belt, and a pulley revolved. A shaft rattled, the pulley clanked, and stopped.

"Looks all right," Bob remarked, and added ironically: "It's not long after eight o'clock, and we have got a lantern. You have not experimented with the dynamos."

"That is so," John agreed. "So long as a dynamo will run, you want to leave her alone. All the same, I think I'll go up the pipe-line and look at the grids and valves."

"You can't see," said Bob. "Then the rocks are wet and the pitch is steep. If you slip at an awkward spot, you may break your leg."

John opened the door. Behind the house wet rocks went up to the black pines whose ragged tops cut the sky, and in places one distinguished the big iron pipe that brought down the water. To get up was awkward, and when the pipe was built the men had

worked on platforms, but John wanted to look at some of the joints. In order to avoid expensive rock-cutting the pipe was not straight. It was emptied before the frost got keen, and John knew one must use some caution when the water was turned on.

"If we got an air-lock, we'd burst the pipe," he said. "In fact, if I wanted to make trouble for Wheeling, I'd start at the power-house."

"Do you think somebody does want to make trouble?"

"I don't know, but it rather looks like that," John replied in a thoughtful voice. "Perhaps Sturdee's statement covers the ground: *things go wrong*. Anyhow, I'll go up. When you see my light flash at the top——"

He gave Bob some careful orders, picked up a thick iron bar, and went off. Bob returned to the tool-box and lighted his pipe. His part was to wait for the signal, and then, after opening a cut-out that allowed the water to pass the turbine, to listen for indications of air-pressure in the pipe.

After a time he went to the door. The rocks were blurred and he could not see the pipe, but the trees had not yet melted into the dark, and in one place the top of the cliff cut the sky. The gratings and sluices that admitted the water to the pipe were a few yards behind the spot. Presently a figure moved along the edge of the cliff, and Bob thought it strange. If John had got up, he had climbed remarkably fast, and Bob looked again. The object at the top was certainly a man, but after a moment or two it vanished.

Bob waited for the flash from John's lantern. All was dark and quiet but for the splash of water, and it

was plain John had not yet shut the cut-out that carried the stream round the head of the pipe. Yet, unless the gear was jammed, John ought in a few minutes to screw down the gate. Then he would open the sluice that fed the pipe; the bar he carried fitted holes in the big screws. Bob listened, but no water came down the pipe.

He began to measure the distance to the top. One or two pitches were awkward; in fact, he hardly thought John, hampered by the bar, could have got up yet. Bob's glance rested on the worst spot, where a ledge stuck out at a corner; and then started. A very indistinct object crossed the ledge and melted into the dark background. All the same, Bob knew he was not cheated. The object was John, and he wondered who was the other.

In the meantime, John went awkwardly up the rocks. He had hung the lantern round his neck, but the bar embarrassed him, and after the thaw the stone was wet, and the soil on some of the ledges was boggy and treacherous. He admitted his exploit was risky, but he wanted to reach the sluices before it was altogether dark, and when the pipe was built the workmen had cut notches for the scaffold poles. Anyhow, he had started and must get up.

At the bottom of the steepest pitch he stopped. A hundred feet below him the river shone with faint reflections, but the high opposite bank was dim. It was like looking down into a deep and narrow pit. Above, the rocks cut his view, but for a short distance he saw a dark slope, broken by a gully, up which the pipe went.

John got his breath and resumed the climb. His

boots slipped on the wet stone, but he made some progress, and then was forced to stop again and feel for a hold. He was now in the gully by the pipe, and wanted to reach a fastening a few feet higher up. When he was ready to start he heard a heavy shock, and instinctively dropped behind the pipe, round which he threw his arm. He was very quick, but as he dropped a large, dark object leaped from a ledge, passed a foot or two overhead, and crashed on a shelf below. The pipe rang as if something had struck the iron, and John's arm hurt.

For a moment or two he did not bother about the pain. He was highly strung and knew a large block had narrowly missed his head. The block had not reached the bottom yet, and leaning against the pipe, he followed its progress by the noise. He heard it rebound from the ledges, smash through juniper scrub, and at length plunge into the pool. Then he began to ponder.

Frost splits hard rock, and after the thaw broken masses roll down the cliffs. The first block had dislodged a smaller piece, which had struck the pipe, and rebounded against his arm. Yet John doubted if the frost accounted for all. He rather thought he had heard a noise before the block came down, and the noise was like the clink of steel. Anyhow, he must get out of the gully and reach the top as soon as possible.

The traverse across the front of the cliff was awkward, but he found a way up, and when he crawled over the ledge did not for a few moments get on his feet. Nobody however, was about, and the bush in front was quiet.

John got up, and going to the sluices, lighted his lantern and put it on the top of the iron post. Standing in the gloom below, he heard nothing but the water, and on the whole was satisfied with his experiment. Then he signalled Bob, put his bar in a socket, and began to turn a big screw. The splash from the cut-out died away and the water throbbed in the pipe, but the gloom by the river was not broken. So long as Bob did not signal, the current was flowing smoothly, from the cut-out at the power-house. After a minute or two John saw he need not bother about shocks in the pipe.

He got his lantern, and throwing the light on the ground, presently found the spot from which the block had broken. When he had studied the break he started for the power-house, but did not go down the rocks. He followed a winding path through the bush, and when he hung up the lantern Bob thought his look was grim.

"You were some time getting up, and had I not heard air blow through the pipe, I'd have been bothered about you when the stone came down," Bob remarked.

"You heard air in the pipe *before* the rock fell?"

"Certainly; two or three minutes before. A gurgling throb, but it stopped almost at once. I thought you were at the screws."

"I was in the gully," said John. "Help me pull off my coat."

Bob pulled off the coat and John rolled up his shirt sleeve. His arm was swollen and marked by a large dark bruise.

"I expect I was lucky because I dropped behind the pipe," he said. "Have you got a cigarette?"

For a time he smoked quietly and then resumed: "You can see the pipe-head from the door."

"That is so," said Bob. "I saw a man not far off the sluice, and thought it was you, until you climbed across a ledge and got against the sky."

"Soon after you saw the man the air blew through the pipe and stopped?"

"Yes," said Bob, and waited, because he knew John had more to tell.

"Well, when you heard the air I didn't turn the screw; and the rock didn't break away because of the thaw. I studied the break."

"Ah!" said Bob, "you think the fellow meant the stone to hit you?"

"Sure. The pipe goes up the gully and I was by the pipe," John replied, and knitted his brows. "The boys know I backed the boss, and I doubt if he fired out all Ivan's crowd. However, I don't know that the fellow planned from the beginning to send down the rock. I rather think he heard my boots on the stones and got blind scared."

Bob nodded. "It's possible! You imagine his plan was to wreck the turbine? Could he have smashed the wheel?"

"Something depends on how the valves were fixed, but my notion is, his object was the dynamo; perhaps he reckoned we'd leave the driving-belt on the locked pulley. You see, the power-house was dark and the fellow didn't know we had started again after supper. When a dynamo has stopped for six months, you can't start her like you start an automobile; she has got to

be watched. If you let her go full-speed she'd fuse all up. Well, Wheeling would have fired *us* out."

"What are you going to do about it?" Bob inquired.

"To begin with, I'll put Wheeling wise. Then I'll look for the man who took a jumper-drill from the mine."

"He'd use the bar to turn the sluice screws?"

"That's not all," said John. "He used the bar to start the rock. The lump was wrenched out; I saw the mark."

"You're keen. Suppose you find the man?"

"Wheeling's boss," said John. "I guess we'll lock the house and start."

In the morning he began his search, but did not find out much until he went to the forge in the afternoon. At the door he met a grumbling miner going out; inside, the smith pushed a long bar into the fire. His face was red and he looked angry.

"What's the trouble?" John inquired.

"Pete's been giving me bad talk because his drill's not sharpened."

John imagined Pete was not the man to meddle with the sluice, and he asked: "Why didn't you sharpen his drill?"

"How'd I sharpen the blame thing, when it wasn't there?"

"But Pete would not get riled unless he'd brought you the drill."

"He brought it all right; I reckon he took it back! Anyhow, in the morning the drill was not about. After dinner I moved some iron, and found the thing by the window. I'd put it in a corner."

"Perhaps you forgot."

"I put it in the corner," the smith declared, and indicated the spot.

John gave him a bolt to cut and went off, but he was persuaded the smith's statement was accurate. Somebody had taken the drill and afterwards dropped it through the window; perhaps because others were about and might see him if he went into the forge. The next thing was to find the man, but John's efforts led him nowhere, and when it got dark he took from the forge two or three small tools.

Next day the smith found the tools were gone and when the men came up for supper began to talk about his loss. Some of the miners bantered him, but some were annoyed. When Sturdee went out one remarked angrily: "We have no use for calipers and a screw-plate. You don't know where you put your blamed truck, Tom. I reckon you'll find the tools like you found Pete's drill."

"When it comes to stealing truck they can't use, the boys are pretty honest," another said with a laugh. "I've seen nobody take nothing from the forge, but not long since I saw Schreiber put something in. Shreiber's honest, anyhow. If he borrowed Tom's tools, he brought them back."

John looked up sharply. "You saw Schreiber take something to the forge?"

"Sure! It was pretty dark, but I knew his walk. He went along by the window, stopped a moment, and I heard a clink."

"My drill!" Pete exclaimed. "Where's the waster? I want to talk to him!"

Somebody said Schreiber had gone up the valley to

look for minks, and John started for Wheeling's office. He knew all he wanted to know. Schreiber did not return, and some time after dark Wheeling took John to the cook's shack.

"Tally up your stores, Li. Let's see if anything's short," he said.

The cook presently held up a bag of flour. The bag was obviously not full, but he declared he had not opened it. Then he took down a slab of bacon, from which a lump was cut, and indicated the piece he used hanging from a hook. Wheeling nodded and went back to his office.

"Schreiber's lit out," he said.

"He hasn't started long," John said meaningly.

"I guess we'll let him go. If we brought him back, I doubt if we could get the police for two or three weeks, and I don't want to hold him for them. We don't know if he's the last of the gang."

"If you're willing, Bob and I will get on his trail, and I'll engage to take him to Ottawa," John said grimly.

"On the whole, I think not. The police would send for me. I'm needed here, and I doubt if the company would approve my going."

"Oh well!" said John. "Schreiber was pretty smart. He took the food from the back, and if you had not thought about the stores, the cook would not have known until the fellow had made the settlement."

"I see another thing: he waited for pay day," Wheeling remarked. "In fact, I imagine he took the stuff in small quantities and made a cache by the trail. All was ready for him to light out when he'd smashed

up our electric plant——" He paused and resumed rather drearily: "Well, I admit that running the Kamistaqua mine sometimes makes me tired."

"When I arrived the crowd you had were pretty hard, but I reckon the worst are gone."

Wheeling smiled. "Just now I wasn't thinking about the boys. If I could trust my bosses, I'd be satisfied."

XI

JOHN OPENS THE SAFE

THE night was calm, and all was quiet at the mine. The men were in their bunks and Wheeling had gone to fish at a lake some distance off and would not return until next day. Since Schreiber vanished nothing had disturbed the monotonous industry at Kamistaqua.

A blanket covered the window of Wheeling's office, for John meant to run no risk. He occupied a box in front of the open safe, and Bob sat on the floor. A lamp hung from a beam and the light touched small ingots of metal, two or three books, and a roll of paper money John had pulled out.

To open the safe had not bothered him. When Wheeling started for the lake he gave the foreman his keys, and Sturdee put the bunch under a board in the office when John was about. His confidence disturbed John, but he had long resolved to study the process used at the electrolytic vats, and now he had got his chance. All the same, he had not yet found out much, and throwing back the roll of bills he picked up a notebook.

"Chemical equations!" he remarked. "Looks like a record of Wheeling's experiments, but it doesn't help us. The metallic symbol's *Cu.*, for copper; I don't see symbols for the other stuff. Well, you know something about laboratory work."

Bob took the book and nodded. "The equations show the reactions in the bath when the copper's precipitated; but the record stops too soon. We want a formula for the combination of acid, silver and nickel, after the copper's gone."

"I really want to know the reaction when Wheeling separates the metals left. He's certainly got a record and I'm going to find it."

"You're an obstinate fellow," Bob remarked. "Then I think you'd sooner use an awkward than a simple plan."

"Shucks!" said John impatiently. "I hated to open Wheeling's safe, but I was forced. We must get the formula. Try the other book."

Bob opened the book and after a minute or two looked up. "Analyses of the ore, before and after roasting. Wheeling's methodical, but if you mean to study all his records, we may stay here until he comes back."

"If necessary, we'll stay until sun-up," John rejoined. "Trust your luck and go ahead. We've got about six hours."

He took some documents from the safe, opened two or three, and put back the bundle. Bob pulled out his watch, lighted his pipe, and slowly turned over the pages in the book. His occupation jarred and he felt some strain, but since John would not go there was no use in arguing. After all, he thought, they did not run much risk. The miners were asleep, and he had not known Sturdee to get up before daybreak.

Sometimes he let a page fall back and lifted his bent head. He heard a light wind in the pines and the

dull turmoil of the rapid. Nothing else disturbed the brooding calm. John, sitting on the box, methodically examined the papers he took from the safe. His brows were knit and his mouth was tight; he moved his fingers, his body did not move at all. Bob thought his look inscrutable, like an Indian's; but he himself was getting sleepy, and he began to scrape out his pipe.

He stopped and turned his head. Then he let his pipe fall, for he heard steps. Somebody was crossing the open ground outside the shack. John put down a bundle of papers and looked up.

"Sturdee! Perhaps he's going to the shaft."

Bob thought not. The noise rather indicated that the man was coming to the office. For a few moments the steps got slow, but were quicker afterwards, and Bob wondered whether some light shone round the edge of the blanket at the window. The steps were now ominously quick and resolute. He braced himself, glanced at John, and tried to smile.

The door opened and Wheeling jumped in. He carried a small automatic pistol, but when he saw John he stopped and his surprise was obvious. For all that, he lifted the pistol.

"Put up your hands!"

"Shucks!" said John. "You're not playing for the film. Put down your gun!"

Wheeling gave him a keen glance, and putting the pistol on the table, sat down. Bob, however, noted that the butt was near his hand. His frowning look indicated that he was altogether puzzled.

"Well," he said, "I'm lucky because I came back.

I somehow felt I oughtn't to stay; but I didn't reckon on your breaking my safe!"

"Our luck, at all events, is not remarkably good," said Bob. "If you had stayed an hour or two longer, we'd have got all we wanted, and you would not have known we had opened the safe."

"When I came to send off the silver, I'd have known all right."

"I expect you're satisfied we meant to steal something?"

Wheeling nodded. "It certainly looks like that!"

"If we were crooks, it's plain we might have opened the safe before; you gave us some chances," John rejoined.

"Perhaps I did so. I own I'm puzzled. If you were not after the ingots and the bank-roll, what did you want?"

"We wanted to find out what you did with the metallic solution at the vats."

"That was all?" said Wheeling with ironical humor.

"Yes," said John in a stern voice, "that was all."

For a few moments Wheeling pondered, and then remarked: "I knew you sometimes loafed about the vats. However, if your object was not to rob me, I can't see your plan. You have got to put me wise."

"Are you willing to take our statement?" Bob inquired.

"I'll *hear* it," said Wheeling dryly.

"Then, we came to Kamistaqua because my partner meant to find out how a small copper mine is run, and particularly the proper use of the electrolytic bath."

Wheeling's eyes twinkled, but his smile was not ironical. Bob thought him amused.

"You worked at the mine for the winter, in order to study metallic electrolysis? Well, it looks as if your partner doesn't like an easy line! But I don't get you yet, and I want to know——"

"Perhaps your curiosity's justified," said Bob. "Sometimes Jake's modest, but if he'll let me talk, I'll try to enlighten you."

Wheeling put away the pistol and pulled out his pipe.

"You have got the floor and can go ahead."

Bob stretched his legs and leaned his back against the wall. He was cramped, for he had not got up when Wheeling came in, and he imagined the other had noted his calm. Now he saw much depended on the way he told his tale. The tale was not altogether plausible, and had he thought Wheeling dull and obstinately suspicious, there would have been no use in his talking. Wheeling, however, was not dull. Bob braced up and began to talk.

He narrated John's arriving in England to undertake the duties given him by his uncle's will and his efforts to lighten the burdens on the estate. Then he indicated some of the obstacles John had met; Wheeling must see that John's resolve to develop the Ruthwaite mine was logical. His narrative was rather business-like than romantic, but he tried to draw John and hoped the portrait was good.

In the meantime, he studied the others. John frowned, as if he did not approve Bob's frankness, but this was not important. Bob had got the floor and meant to keep it until all was told. Wheeling said nothing, but Bob noted his interest and was encouraged. The mine boss was young, and although he was not a

fool, one could move him and know when he was moved. Sometimes he smiled, and his smile puzzled Bob. At length Bob said: "Well, I think you see——"

"Sure!" said Wheeling. "I get it now. Your partner is the man I thought; but he goes for an obstacle like a bull moose. He doesn't stop to calculate if he can go round."

"I rather think Jake is like that," Bob agreed, with keen relief. "All the same, when he resolved to open your safe, I couldn't see another line."

Wheeling's eyes twinkled. "You meant to steal my records, in order to find out how I separated the metals left in the bath. Well, I'll *show you.*"

"You'll show us?" Bob gasped.

"Certainly," said Wheeling. "Our process is pretty good; in fact, I reckon it's better than some, but there's nothing remarkably secret about it. When Jake started for Canada, he ought to have gone to a *library.*"

"D'you imply I could have got what I wanted from a book?" John inquired, and his voice was hoarse.

"If England's like America, you could do so. In our Western states we have institutes at which you can study scientific mining and the latest smelting processes. All you want to do is to use the card-index."

John turned to Bob and his face got red. "Do you think Franklin knew my going to Canada was ridiculous?"

"I think it very possible," Bob said dryly.

John crossed the floor. "We take your offer, and thank you, Mr. Wheeling. Still, since you found us in front of your open safe, I don't yet see how Bob persuaded you."

"Bob can tell a tale, but you, yourself, persuaded me," Wheeling remarked.

"But I said nothing!"

"That is so," Wheeling agreed, with a smile. "Your habit is not to say much."

John went off, but Bob waited; he imagined Wheeling wanted him to stay. Wheeling got up and brought some cigars.

"Take a smoke."

Bob lighted a cigar and presently remarked: "After all, I think we were lucky you came back. Still, the thing was strange."

"I don't know if it was very strange. At Kamistauqua one gets a nervous habit of expecting trouble."

"If trouble arrived, you might lose your post?"

Wheeling smiled. "I engaged to run the mine and want to make good, but if the company sent along another manager I'd be resigned. Anyhow, we won't bother about this. I like your partner. Is he in love with the girl who owns the English estate?"

"So far, I don't know. It's possible Jake's unconsciously in love, but it does not account for his resolve to study copper-refining."

"He's certainly a good trustee," Wheeling remarked, and began to ask about the Ruthwaite mine.

Bob thought his curiosity strange, but he had no grounds for reserve, and they talked until their cigars burned out. In the morning Wheeling took John to the vats, and gave him all the particulars he wanted about the process.

"Since Malcolm reckons he can run the dynamos, you had better stop and help at the refining," he said.

"When we have got all the copper, I'll show you how

we treat the stuff that's left. Then you can come to the office and make proper notes of the chemical reactions.

John stopped at the vats for a week or two and then went one morning with Bob to Wheeling's shack. Wheeling gave them his notes and records, and after a time remarked: "I expect you will soon be ready to pull out."

"As soon as you will let me go off," said John. "I must get back and use your methods at the Ruthwaite lode."

"You know something about electric copper-refining, but you don't know all," Wheeling replied. "If you want a manager for the English mine——"

"Why, of course!" said John, and gave him his hand, "The post is yours and we must try to agree about the pay."

A month afterwards, Wheeling, John and Bob one morning got on board a bateau. The sun had not cleared the hilltops and blue mist rolled about the pines. The morning was bracingly cold, and sweet resinous scents drifted down the valley. A group of miners stood on the river bank, and Sturdee leaned against the bow of the bateau.

"I sure wish you luck," he said to John. "When I turned down your offer, I reckoned I was getting old and ought to stop where I belonged——" He paused and resumed regretfully: "Now you and the boss are going, I don't want to stop."

"Then, why don't you come along?" John rejoined.

Sturdee started for the bunkhouse, and in a few minutes returned with a clumsy pack and jumped on board. A miner shoved off the bateau, the others waved their

hats, and the paddles splashed. The swift current seized the bateau, pines and rocks rolled back, and a stony hillside began to break the view.

For a few moments Bob saw the ugly bunkhouse and buildings about the stack against a background of rolling mist; then the canoe plunged down a rapid, and Kamistaqua was gone. Bob swung his paddle and looked ahead. At the mine he had known exhausting labor, strain on pluck and muscle, rude good fellowship and splendid health. Now all this was done with, and he was going back to his proper job. He was keen to get back, but all the same he was conscious of a vague regret. He thought in English cities he would sometimes hear the tossing pines and the lonely river call.

PART III

THE FORLORN HOPE

I

ALICE PONDERS

A WEEK after his return to Ruthwaite, John one evening occupied the window-seat in the tower room. His brows were knit and his mouth was tight, for since his arrival he had been strenuously engaged and had got some nasty jars. Hugh Elliot and Markham were at the table, about which books, documents and plans of the mine were scattered. Wheeling, holding an analyst's report, fronted the group and talked.

Perhaps it was his youth and the contrast with the others' calm, but in the austere, old-fashioned room he looked exotic. Sometimes his quick glance rested on Markham and sometimes on Elliot, as if he were baffled. Only when he turned to John he smiled.

Elliot's arm was on the table and his chin on his hand. John thought he had got much older. His glance was languid, and one felt he listened to Wheeling with wellbred politeness; Markham quietly studied the American.

"In short, after examining the mine, you believe the vein is worth developing?" he remarked at length.

"Why, I stated something like that when I started!" Wheeling replied with nervous impatience. "You have got a pretty good mineral property; but if it pays you two or three cents on the dollar, I reckon that's all."

"Your calculation is nearly accurate," said Hugh. "We are satisfied to get a dollar for a dollar. Sometimes we do not."

"I understand you don't approve the lines on which the mine is worked?" Markham resumed.

Wheeling looked at him hard and used some control. He had thought it obvious that he did not at all approve; but so far as he could see, the old fellow was not joking.

"Well," he said, "if you *want* the mine to pay——"

"That is our object, Mr. Wheeling," Hugh replied languidly.

"Then, you have got to use a modern plant. You must roast the ore twice, put up a reverberatory smelter and electrolytic vats. Hauling coal would cost you high, but if you use turbines the creek that comes down the hill would give you power. You'd want a dam, concrete work, and a long steel pipe."

"To remodel our plant would cost a large sum," said Hugh.

Wheeling agreed, and stated that he had roughly calculated the cost, although he had used American prices for materials and labor.

"The sum is very large," Hugh remarked in a toneless voice.

"I imagine the money could be got," said Markham. "In fact, I, myself, might speculate. Then we could perhaps float a small private company."

For a few moments the others were quiet, and Wheeling felt their silence baffling. Their faces indicated nothing, but he thought John waited for Elliot. Then Hugh looked up.

"Thank you! The thing needs weighing, and one must not be rash. When Mr. Wheeling has worked out his plans, we will talk about it again."

Markham got up, Hugh indicated that Wheeling

might go, and when they went off looked at John, rather deprecatingly.

"I expect you remarked my hesitation?"

"Yes," said John. "It's possible Markham did so!"

"He would, no doubt, agree that our pondering is justified. I admit I'd sooner not use his money."

John knitted his brows. Markham sometimes came to Ruthwaite, and, in a sense, he and Hugh were friends. Yet they had disputed, and fresh jars were possible. Hugh's school was the old school, and his prejudices were strong. All the same, John saw he must not indulge him.

"It looks as if we'll need his money, and his help is useful. Markham's a good business man."

"Philip is a business man and would, no doubt, invest."

"I think not," John said firmly. "We will leave Philip alone."

Hugh pulled some documents across the table. Before the others arrived he and John had been occupied by the estate accounts. Hugh admitted that John had some grounds to be disturbed.

"Well," he said, "I feel I must not urge you. On business matters your judgment's sound, and Alice's inheritance has not prospered in my control."

"We won't bother about that. When we start the new smelter and electric plant we'll put all straight."

"Then you are resolved to develop the mine on Wheeling's lines?"

"That is so," John said quietly. "The farm rents hardly meet our bills; the estate's going down. We have got to find revenue for improvements and to wipe off debts, and the copper lode, so to speak, is our last

hope. Since a good sum is needed, I've cabled a broker to sell my Canadian mineral claim."

Hugh gave him a friendly glance. His entanglements were numerous, and he was old and getting slack. To note John's pluck and confidence was bracing.

"I can't help; you know my poverty," he said. "You are very staunch, John, but perhaps you run some risk."

John smiled. "If necessary, I'll risk all I've got, but we'll talk about the mine again. Where did you put Dalton's note about the mortgage?"

In the meantime Wheeling went to the terrace and leaned against the wide-topped wall. The sun was low, and shadows checkered the lawn. Wheeling thought the grass strangely fine and smooth; grass like that did not grow in Canada. In the sun it shone luminously green, its velvet surface reflecting the light. Creepers and roses grew about the front of the house, and between the trailing branches soft-colored lichen dotted the stone. In the background were dark-blue hills and a belt of yellow sky. Wheeling got a sense of ripe age and serenity.

Glancing along the terrace, he saw Alice occupied a bench at the other end. He wanted to join her, but hesitated, although to hesitate was not his habit. Miss Elliot's type was new, and her calm pride was rather daunting. Something he had not yet got up against marked her and Elliot. Elliot was obviously out-of-date, but he had qualities. Anyhow, Wheeling thought if Miss Elliot were willing to talk to him she would let him know. Then she turned her head and smiled, and he went along the terrace.

"When you came out I think you frowned," she said.

"It's possible," Wheeling admitted with a twinkle. "You see, I was tired. For most half an hour I'd talked to two English gentlemen, and when I stopped I didn't know if they were moved at all. On the whole, they looked bored."

"One is my grandfather," Alice remarked.

"Well, Mr. Elliot is certainly polite, and perhaps he's patient. In America, if I'd bored the company's president I'd have known in about two minutes, and then——"

"You imagine my grandfather's position is something like the president's of an American mining company?"

Wheeling rather thought Elliot was not important, and it was obvious that if the company went, John must supply the driving force. He wondered whether Alice knew or wanted to know. Anyhow, his business was not to enlighten her.

"When Jake talks about Mr. Elliot, he talks as if Mr. Elliot were boss. I don't bother to investigate; I play up."

Alice said nothing. The slanting sunbeams were on the bench, and her hair shone like red California gold. Her skin was delicately white and pink, and her dress was a soft dull blue. Wheeling thought her beautiful, and got a hint of imperious waywardness that intrigued him. By and by she looked up carelessly.

"What do you think about the Allerdale miners, Mr. Wheeling?"

Wheeling thought she was not really curious about

the miners; she wanted to lead him somewhere, but had not yet indicated where he ought to go. In the meantime, to talk to a girl like that had some charm.

"They're certainly not the American type," he said. "I tell them how I want things fixed, and they look at me, without a sign; I don't know if they've heard! They're big and slow. If the roof fell in I don't think they'd jump, but when you measure up the work, you find they've cut 'most as much rock as our live hustlers. I expect I've got to readjust my point of view."

"Perhaps it's a useful exercise," Alice remarked. "But what do you think about Allerdale?"

"To begin with, your fences tickle me. The valley's marked off in ridiculous little fields by big walls, and where you can't find stones you grow a high thorn hedge. Somehow the thing's characteristic. What's yours is, in no sense, another's. Do you get me?"

"Then you don't use walls in America," said Alice, smiling.

"On the plains, you can ride all day and not strike a fence. In our small towns, the streets are avenues of fine shade-trees; the frame-houses stand back on their garden lots. Not a rail all along; nothing to keep people off! If they like our grass and flowers, why, we're proud!"

"I rather think we do build walls—round our houses and ourselves," Alice remarked. "Perhaps the habit has drawbacks, but the walls have gates one can open to people one likes——" She stopped, and smiled when she resumed: "Two of my relations were with you at Kamistaqua. It does not look as if they shut you out."

Wheeling began to see where she led. She was

curious about John; perhaps John had not talked much about his adventures. Wheeling did not know if John loved Miss Elliot, but if he did so, it was not strange. The girl's charm was strong, and Wheeling was willing to satisfy her curiosity.

"Jake is my sort and Bob is not; but sometimes I felt I knew Bob better than Jake. I could reckon on what Jake would do; I did not know all he thought. He's typically Canadian, a pretty good type, but when he looks at you with his eyes half shut, you feel he's altogether English and you can't locate him."

"I rather think John *goes back*. If you had known his uncle——" Alice said and stopped. "But I imagined you were his friend," she resumed.

"He is my friend," Wheeling replied, and resolved she should understand all that John, for her sake, had undertaken. "Jake's a useful friend. I was up against a bad gang and he saw me out. Looks as if you didn't know about this? Well, I'll tell you——"

His narrative was dramatic. Wheeling was Western and did not use reserve. He pictured the strenuous labor at the mine, the cold and dreariness, and then began to talk about Ivan's plot. Alice's imagination was keen; she could feel the strain Wheeling and his supporters had borne. His tale was moving and he noted that Alice's eyes sparkled, but he did not dwell upon the anarchists. He wanted to picture John's efforts to study all that one could learn, and when he narrated his return to the shack at night Alice looked up sharply.

"John had opened your safe? I did not know about this!"

"The safe was open. Jake meant to find out how

we electrolyzed the silver, and couldn't see another plan. When I jumped in and pulled my gun he looked at me with his eyes half shut. He wasn't bothered about the pistol, but because he thought his chance to get my notes was gone. Bob did not get up. He looked as if he were bored, and when he stated their object I laughed. You see, Jake need not have broken my safe. I'd have *told* him all he wanted to know."

"John is rather like that, and perhaps the thing was humorous," Alice remarked. "You imply your process is not secret? In order to find out how copper is refined by electric current John need not have gone to America?"

"I don't know if I implied this, but it is so."

"Ah," said Alice, "I wonder——"

She stopped and Wheeling remembered that John had asked Bob: *'Do you think Franklin knew?'* He, however, said nothing and Alice mused. Although she had known John's stanchness, he was stancher and finer than she had thought. Then she began to speculate whether his resolve to carry out his trustee's duty altogether accounted for his remaining at the mine. Wheeling, of course, could not directly enlighten her, but she might find out something. After a few moments she saw Violet Markham come to the steps.

"I left the car at the gate," Violet said. "Do you know if father is ready?"

"He went some time since," Alice replied, and was rather annoyed because Wheeling got up. Wheeling ought to get up, but Alice did not want Violet to join them on the bench.

Although Violet Markham was rather strongly built, she was languidly graceful. Alice owned she had some

charm, and on the whole approved her; but John had gone to Scarfoot two or three evenings in the week.

"After all," said Violet, "I did not promise to call for father. When I was driving home, I remembered he had gone to see Mr. Elliot. However, since the car is in the road I ought not to stop——"

Alice did not mean her to stay and imagined Violet knew, for she turned and gave Wheeling a smile.

"If you are going, I can put you down at the inn."

"You are kind," said Wheeling. "I was ready to go."

They went off. Violet had conquered, and although Alice admitted that her annoyance was ridiculous, she was annoyed. The Markhams were not altogether her sort, but she was willing to be friendly. In fact, she and Violet were rather good friends until John returned.

Alice pulled herself up. John was not her lover, and Wheeling certainly was not, but she did not like Violet to carry him off. Perhaps she had done so in revenge because Alice had not invited her to stay. There was no use in her attracting Wheeling, because he was poor, and Markham would not approve. Markham, however, obviously approved John, and Alice frowned. She was perhaps not logical; but suppose Violet meant to cultivate Wheeling because John was his friend? She got up impatiently and went to the house. Somehow the tranquil evening's charm was gone.

II

THE TENNIS PARTY

AN old beech tree threw a belt of shade about the tea-table on the lawn. The shade was thin and broken by splashes of yellow light that flickered when the breeze tossed the fresh leaves. An oak in the background shone warm bronze, but the branches of the ash trees by the waterside were thinly tufted by half-opened foliage. Summer comes late to the bleak hills that front the Irish Sea.

John loafed in a basket chair. At one end of the lawn was a tennis net, but he did not play, and was content to watch the young people engaged in a game. The sunny grass was a good background for the swiftly-moving figures; white flannels and light dresses shone against the green. John liked movement, and the landscape across the hedge was checkered by soft light and trailing shadow.

On fixed days, when it did not rain, a tennis net was put up and tea was served on the lawn. One came and went when one wanted and did what one liked. If John was not at the mine he sometimes joined the others, and sometimes took Wheeling to the tower-room. Although Ruthwaite was his, he acknowledged Mrs. Franklin and Elliot his hosts.

Alice, helping her aunt at the tea-table, studied the group. Mrs. Markham occupied a neighboring chair. She was large, rather fat, and generally placid, but

Alice admitted that her clothes were good. In fact, she thought the dressmaker who becomingly draped Mrs. Markham's figure used some skill. Violet Markham was farther off. She, too, was strongly built, but her unconscious pose was graceful. Wheeling, sitting near, perhaps by contrast, looked very keen and highly strung. Violet's hair and eyes were dark-brown, and the thin material that covered her firmly-moulded arms and shoulders was a dull-gold color. It looked as if a girl next her had remarked about the dress, for Violet said: "I'm not satisfied. Some time when I'm energetic I must take out the seam."

Alice was puzzled. Violet ought not to talk about her clothes, and Alice thought she knew her voice carried farther than her companion. The other was young and unsophisticated.

"Then you made this?" said the young girl. "It has altogether a professional touch."

Violet turned her head and fronted Wheeling. The movement was careless, but somehow her glance was proud.

"I expect I inherited the professional touch. My mother was a dressmaker."

"That is so. Violet has my hands and taste," Mrs. Markham agreed. "After I dressed the mayor's little daughter for a children's ball the aldermen's ladies all came to me, but when Tom got a manager's post we were married and I gave up the shop."

Alice looked at Hugh and thought him amused. She, herself, was annoyed. Violet knew her mother and had, no doubt, meant her to talk, but her object was not plain. Perhaps she wanted Wheeling to know the stock from which she sprang, and perhaps she

played up to John. Anyhow, Violet had struck a note she ought not to strike at a Ruthwaite tennis party.

Then Mrs. Franklin began to talk about something else, and John and Markham crossed the lawn. Violet and Wheeling went off to the tennis court and soon afterwards Franklin stopped by Alice's chair. Alice had not remarked his arrival.

"I don't see John and his backwoodsmen," he said.

Alice frowned. Sometimes she did not approve John's line, but she would not allow Philip to sneer.

"Mr. Wheeling is not at all a backwoodsman."

"It's possible," said Franklin carelessly. "I haven't studied the fellow, but when I last came over I met the foreman, and thought him something of the frontier type."

"Do you want to see John?" Alice asked in an ominously quiet voice.

"I don't know that I want him particularly, but he is host and has vanished," Franklin replied, and glancing round added: "Miss Markham is not about."

The blood came to Alice's skin. Philip meant to be nasty, but it was perhaps important that he thought Violet attracted John.

"Violet went to the tennis court with Wheeling," she said. "If you look, I expect you'll see them."

Franklin looked and smiled. "They are not remarkably obvious! Well, perhaps Wheeling's romantic, and Miss Markham has charm. Her charm is not yours, but I expect it would move men of Wheeling's type."

"Violet's my friend. I think we'll talk about something else," Alice rejoined, for she saw Philip implied that Violet's charm would move John. She noted

that when she declared Violet was her friend he looked amused.

"Very well," he agreed. "I understand John expects to get the sum he needs for his mining experiments and is nearly ready to start."

"Don't you know he is ready to start?"

"I do not. I was interested and thought I might invest, but it looks as if John did not mean to bother his relations. In fact, one feels he rather leaves us out."

"But grandfather is going to be the company's chairman."

"I doubt," said Franklin dryly. "Markham will probably take the chairman's post. Hugh, of course, is not a miner, but perhaps to acknowledge him nominal head would be the proper line. John, however, is sternly practical——"

He looked up, and seeing Mrs. Franklin was alone, crossed the grass. Philip knew where to stop, and when he had gone Alice knitted her brows. From the beginning Philip had not liked John, and since Alice had grounds to imagine Philip wanted to marry her, she could account for his antagonism. The marriage would have marked advantages, and Alice at one time had vaguely wondered. Now she saw the drawbacks, but she tried to think she had done so before John arrived.

Philip had tried to work on her prejudices, but his remarks were perhaps to some extent justified. Violet was John's sort and he, no doubt felt her charm. But Markham was not the Elliots' sort, and John had rather trusted him than his relations. Hugh, for example,

ought to get the chairman's post; he was head of the house and her grandfather, and the mine was really hers. Hugh would feel another had taken his proper place, and to know his neighbors marked the slight would hurt. Alice was generous, and resolved to be firm.

She glanced at Hugh, who occupied a chair by Mrs. Markham's. He had recently begun to look old, and his face was rather pinched, but he smiled urbanely. Alice knew Mrs. Markham's talk was not as a rule illuminating, and she was sorry for Hugh. While he tried to amuse a rather boring guest, John talked to Markham about the mine!

Alice's supposition was accurate. John and Markham occupied a bench in a nook cut out of a thick yew. The lawn and tennis court were hidden, and except when a shout and laughter pierced the trembling shade all was quiet. By and by Markham took some letters from his pocket.

"At Sheffield I interviewed the big steel-founders, and then went to see the head of a famous Lancashire engineering house. On the whole Wheeling's calculations are accurate, but I find we can put up a useful experimental plant for a smaller sum. Look at the estimates."

John studied the documents and nodded. "To save three thousand pounds is some relief, and the turbines ought to give us the power we need. We must have power because, in a sense, the venture is not an experiment. The mine has got to pay, and we'll enlarge the plant as we go on. But what about the capital?"

"I looked up one or two manufacturing friends, who might join us, and for the most part our neighbors

would speculate. They like to feel they're helping a local industry and prefer an investment they can watch. Then I am willing to run some risk. Well, I'm satisfied we can float a small private company, and we must think about the directors. Have you sounded Elliot?"

"I have not," said John. "For one thing, I imagine Hugh could not invest."

"All the same, we might perhaps allot him a few qualifying shares, for payment afterwards. I expect he would like it."

"Do you imagine we'd find Elliot a useful director?"

"Oh well," said Markham, smiling, "he's Miss Elliot's relation, and to appoint him chairman would, no doubt, please her. After all, he might not bother us much."

John gave him a level glance. "The venture's a business proposition; we can't be generous. Then, although Hugh might not bother us, Dalton is his agent, and I'm resolved the fellow shall not meddle with the mine."

"Dalton must not meddle," Markham agreed in a thoughtful voice. "Well, what about Franklin? He's something of a chemist and was a banker. I understand he's rich."

"We'll leave Franklin alone," said John, and his mouth went tight.

"Perhaps your decision's prudent, but it may cost you something," Markham replied with dry humor, and began to talk about the new furnaces. Then he said he wanted to see Wheeling, and went off.

John stopped and mused, but after a few minutes he heard a gate shut, and looked up. The gate led to a shady walk by the river, and Violet Markham and

Wheeling came along the path. Wheeling was talking and wore a small tennis cap. The sun touched his face, and John wondered that he had not before remarked that Wheeling was rather a handsome fellow. Violet smiled, and John thought her smile strangely attractive. It was obvious that they did not see him, and he got up.

"Mr. Markham went to look for you not long since," he said to Wheeling.

"Which way did he go?"

John indicated the path to the tennis court.

"Then I reckon we'll take the other," Wheeling replied, and turned to Violet. "I can talk to Mr. Markham again. On an afternoon like this, I'm not keen to bother about turbines and pumps."

They went back, and John thought Violet's consenting laugh significant, although he doubted if Markham would see the joke. Then he began to fill his pipe, but stopped when Alice came round a corner. She sat down at the other end of the bench, and John saw her mouth was straight and her eyes were remarkably bright.

"I admit I owe you much, John," she said.

"People who think they owe me something generally call me *Jake*."

"As a rule, you mean well," Alice resumed. "You don't hesitate. When you think you see what you ought to do, you get to work——"

The corner of John's mouth went up, and his eyes twinkled. "Looks as if I had some virtues; but since you admit it, I expect you want to talk about my drawbacks."

"You're impetuous. Before one gets to work, one ought to weigh things properly."

"For example?"

"Well, I don't doubt your plans for the mine are excellent, but I feel you haven't seen that when you give important posts to strangers you will hurt your friends. Grandfather ought to be chairman."

"The obstacle is, we need money and the directors must invest a good sum."

"After all, the copper is mine, and if I am willing to give grandfather some shares——"

"The copper is not yours yet," said John. "When you reach the age your step-father fixed, or when you marry with my approval, you can use your inheritance as you like. In the meantime, my business is to take care of it for you."

Alice's eyes sparkled and the blood came to her skin. "Water-tube John was very kind, but his will was *odious!*"

"There's another thing," John resumed quietly. "The estate is embarrassed, and in order to put all straight the mine must be run with energy on proper lines. It's, so to speak, our forlorn hope. Markham knows what I'm up against, but the shareholders will not be numerous, and since I can't get business men, I want people who'll agree. Your neighbors will not meddle much, but Hugh is head of your house and is used to rule. I can't argue and persuade folks. When I can't get help, I must be left alone."

"In fact, you are resolved to leave grandfather out! Yet, if he had not agreed, I think you could not float the company."

"That is so," said John, and stopped. To state that Hugh durst not refuse because he had let the estate down would not help. John knew his arguments were good, but he must not persuade Alice by talking about her grandfather's slackness. Besides, he might not persuade her. She was sometimes obstinate.

Alice was quiet for a few moments, and he thought she tried for control. Then she said with forced calm: "I hate to urge you, John, but it is not for myself. Grandfather is old, he was long important at Allerdale. Now your not making him chairman implies that you doubt him, and people will wonder. Don't you see, in a way it's a public humiliation?"

"I doubt Hugh's being able to help us at the mine; that's all. In fact, I rather think he understands, and if he knew you had tried to persuade me he would not like it."

Alice got up and smiled scornfully. Although her face was red, she looked very proud.

"Grandfather certainly would not like it! Our habit is not to beg things from grudging people, but, for his sake, I argued with you. That I would do so for mine is unthinkable! Well, it cost me much and I will not try it again."

She went off, and when John picked up his pipe his smile was dreary. He had carried out his duty, but duty was sometimes hard.

III

THE SHEEP-PATH

JOHN thought nobody was in the greenhouse, and pulling off his wet mackintosh, he took a trowel from a box. He had been engaged at the mine since morning, and meant to enjoy a quiet smoke before he went to change his clothes. To superintend while others undertook an awkward job was not his habit, and he had helped to wedge up some large, muddy props. When he had smoked his pipe and cleaned his boots, he would get into the house quietly by the glass door that opened to the drawing-room.

He went round a row of tall plants and stopped, for Alice looked up from a basket chair. Her clothes were fashionable, and John was conscious that his were like a navvy's.

"What are you going to do with the trowel, John?" she asked.

"If you are curious, I meant to use it for a scraper; there's obviously not much use in my beginning with a brush. I reckon the carpet in the drawing-room is pretty good."

"The carpet is yours and could be cleaned."

"The drawing-room is Mrs. Franklin's. I don't think she'd like my muddy tracks," John rejoined.

"You are really a good sort," said Alice. "The trouble is, you're very obstinate!"

John sat down on a flower-stand. He had not

thought Alice revengeful, and since their dispute she had sometimes bantered him good-humoredly. All the same, it was perhaps significant that she had not done so unless the others were about. By and by she gave him a newspaper and indicated a paragraph in which the musical critic praised the violinist's playing at a London concert.

"I'm glad to note Miss Hall's making progress; I think she'll go far," he said.

"Yet you refused to let me help her!"

"That is so. I own my refusal was wrong, but I didn't know Miss Hall then."

"Ada would like to stay with us for a week or two."

"Why, of course! Tell her to come along."

"I thought I would not," said Alice in a quiet voice. "But when you declared the drawing-room was Mrs. Franklin's I felt I was shabby."

John gave her a twinkling smile. "Well, I allow you were not logical. Since I'd refused to make your grandfather chairman, you would not bring your friend to Ruthwaite, because the house was mine? You were going to indulge your pride at her cost. Since I'm dull and would not have known, it would not hurt me."

"Sometimes you're not very dull. Suppose you had known?"

"Then I'd have sent Miss Hall a telegram. I expect she needs a holiday, and Ruthwaite is mine. In fact, unless you'd sooner write to her, I'll telegraph now. What are you going to do about it?"

Alice smiled, but her look was gentle. "I think I'll write a letter, Jake. I was shabby, but you're

rather nice. If you were not so horribly obstinate——"

She opened the glass door and went into the house. John laughed and began to scrape his muddy boots.

A few days afterwards Ada arrived, and Alice planned excursions to the hills. Alice rather took it for granted that sports she found bracing would brace her friends. She sent for Franklin, who knew the rocks, and Bob arrived from a manufacturing town for a short holiday.

After a picnic on a mountain top, they came down one afternoon across sharp stones to a narrow tableland, and Alice stopped her party. For an hour or two they had rested in warm sunshine behind a rock, but now the sun had gone. Lead-colored mists began to roll about the peaks and obscure the valleys. For the most part, Franklin had followed beaten paths, and the rope they carried had not been used. Nobody was much tired, and although Ruthwaite was some distance off, Franklin's big car waited at a farm in a neighboring dale. John imagined Alice felt the excursion was tame. Standing at the edge of the tableland, she studied the ground.

The hillside was steep and in places broken by rough ledges that looked like the tops of small crags. Between the breaks were banks of stones, white bent grass, and belts of moss and boggy heath. The moss was dull green, the heath was dingy brown. All was cold and dim, but a lake glimmered in the mist two thousand feet below. Some distance down the slope a vague, dark ravine pierced the rocks.

"We can take one of two lines," Alice remarked.

"The tourists' path winds about among the little crags, and where you must go down it's like going downstairs."

"Rocks like stairs have not much charm for you," said Violet Markham.

"As a rule, the smooth path is not romantic," Alice rejoined. "Then Ada and Mr. Wheeling don't know our mountains, and I want them to see the ghyll. It really is romantic, and the other track follows its top to the dale. What do you think, Philip?"

"I expect we can get down. One spot is sometimes awkward after rain, but that's all, and now the ground is dry."

John looked at Ada and thought she was not tired. He did not like Franklin, and knew he would, if possible, indulge Alice, but the fellow was cautious and a good mountaineer. John was persuaded Franklin would not run a risk.

"Then let's go by the ghyll?" he suggested, and they set off. They crossed an angry stream that boiled in a deep hole at the bottom of a fall, ploughed through a bog, and went down sharp stones. Some time afterwards they came to the top of the ghyll and stopped to look down. The ravine was narrow, a few yards across at the top; the sides were smooth and perpendicular, and at the bottom, far below, stones were piled and water brawled.

"The ghyll is romantic," Violet remarked to Wheeling. "Still, after your Western cañons, I expect you think it ridiculously small."

Wheeling looked about. It was six o'clock in the evening, but rocks and stony slopes were blurred and dark; the mist exaggerated their height and rugged-

ness. The landscape was strangely desolate. One heard falling water and the wind in the crags.

"Our cañons are larger, but they're in the desert, in country that was the Indians' until we pushed on the steel track from Omaha. In your crowded England one gets a sense of contrast. I reckon in an hour a good walker would hit a fine graded road, running down a valley dotted by white homesteads and corn-fields. Two hours in the cars would carry him to linked-up factory towns. Smelters, smoke, coalpits and mills; and then spots like this! At Allendale nobody hustles; people talk and live as I expect they talked and lived before Elizabeth's Virginia colonists blazed the trails for us."

Franklin signed the party forward, and the steepness of the pitch presently forced them back from the top of the ravine. After a time, when they were some distance above the edge, they reached a semicircular hollow, cut by a land-slide from the front of the hill. The pitch was steep, but small banks of gravel rested on the slope, and the soil between the banks looked firm and dry. A sheep-path, perhaps a foot wide, went across, and Franklin said the rule was, where a scree could lie at rest a man might venture. Twenty yards from the path, the soil and gravel stopped at the edge of the ghyll. Although the faint track looked risky, so long as one was steady it was safe.

"What about the rope?" John asked.

"If you like we'll tie on, but I don't think there's much use in our bothering. Besides, to hold up another on a rope you need firm anchorage for your feet," Franklin replied. "We can, however, go by a longer way round the back of the hill."

Alice said they ought to get down before the rain began, and they started. For the most part, the path was good, and, winding round projections, ran like a narrow riband across the hollow. Sheep had trodden the soil firm, and made a level track across the banks of scree. Sometimes a few stones rolled down and plunged into the chasm, but this was all.

Near the other end, where the outward curve of the hollow and the hillside met at a corner, Franklin stopped. For a yard or two the path had slipped down and the gravel and soil were wet. A few embedded stones struck out from the pitch, and a short distance above rocky ledges cut one's view.

"I think you can get across," said Franklin. "However, I'll go up to the broken ground, and look for an easier line."

He and Alice went up, but before they reached the ledges mist rolled about the group and big drops began to fall.

"We must get down as soon as possible," Bob remarked and seizing a stone, kicked a hole in the wet soil and jumped across.

"It's not at all hard," he said to Ada. "John will steady you until you can reach my hand."

Ada went across and John shouted to Franklin that he need not bother. The others knew something about proper climbing, and John imagined that but for Ada Franklin would not have stopped. So long as one used some caution, the risk was very small. When John looked at Violet she laughed.

"I am not a beginner, but you may steady me until I reach the hole Bob kicked."

She rested her hand on his arm, and putting her boot in the hole, seized a stone. John thought to see her swing across to the other end of the broken path, but her pose got strained. The stone she had seized came out of the soil, her body sank against the bank, and he knew she was going down.

Slipping from the path, he drove his nailed boots savagely into the stones and got some hold. Violet seized him; for a moment or two he felt her hand press hard on his shoulder, and then the load was gone. Violet had reached the corner, but the push that lifted her had sent him down. His boots slipped on muddy soil and stones; he turned until his head was level with his feet, and rolled helplessly down the pitch. Gravel rattled and he knew it plunged across the top of the ghyll. After he had rolled a few yards, however, he stopped and buried his legs in the scree. He was some distance from the path, but did not know how far he was from the ghyll. Moreover, he did not mean to look. So long as he was quiet, he thought the stones would stop at rest.

Lying in the gravel, his view was restricted to one side, but he saw people on the path and Violet coming down the scree. Her body was stiffly braced and at a curious angle with the bank. It looked as if the scree were perpendicular and she were falling off. The stones went down with her, and she did not move her feet. John noted that her face was colorless, but he thought her cool.

Farther back, and above the path, Alice sprang across the broken rocks. Speed was perhaps rash, but she had the rock-climber's balance and went,

lightly poised, from shelf to shelf. Bob scrambled across the gap, and when Alice reached the path seized her arm. John thought they struggled, but they were getting out of his line of view. Then Violet stopped, three or four yards above the spot he occupied. Her feet were buried in the gravel, and the outward curve of her short dress indicated that one knee was stiffly braced.

"Are you hurt?" she asked.

"Not at all," said John. "You can't pull me up. Go back!"

"I doubt if I can go back. You didn't move. I thought——"

"If I move and you try to come down, we'll go over the ghyll," said John.

He heard shouts and Violet turned her head. She signed to somebody, and stones rattled. Then she stooped, and John saw she had picked up the end of a rope.

"I'll throw it you. Get hold."

"Not yet," John said angrily. "I expect they've made the rope fast. Go up."

"If I go up, there wasn't much use in my coming down," Violet remarked with a strained laugh.

"Don't talk! *Start!*" said John.

Violet turned and called to somebody above: "Are you anchored?"

"We can stand for some weight," said Wheeling, and Violet passed obliquely out of John's view.

The rope came down again and John, moving his arm cautiously, got the end and thrilled. Now he need not bother. One could trust the light, fine-spun rope, which would give him all the help he needed.

He began to climb and in a minute or two reached the path.

"You made it, Jake! At the beginning I was surely scared," said Wheeling.

John gave him a grateful nod and turned to Violet. Her color had come back, and she smiled.

"I have got to thank you. Your coming down to me was fine," he said.

"It was rather rash than useful," Violet rejoined. "Still, you see, I was conscience-stricken. When I pushed myself across I pushed you down, and I ought not to have slipped. For a climber to trust a loose stone is ridiculous."

John looked at the others. Not far off Bob sat in the stones. Ada and Franklin waited a few yards back. Alice was nearer and he thought she studied him.

"You started. I saw you jump across the blocks like a mountain deer," he began, but she laughed.

"Sometimes I'm rash. Perhaps we were lucky because Bob is not."

Bob grinned, and John noted that in one spot his face was red.

"I stopped her; that was my part," Bob remarked. "Wheeling was the really useful man. He got the rope."

"Mr. Wheeling was cool and quick," Franklin agreed. "I was some distance off, and he was ready with the rope before I got down. But if John's not hurt suppose we start."

They went up across the blocks, for all had had enough of the ghyll, and for a time nobody talked much. John thought his plunge down the scree had

disturbed the others, but their quietness was puzzling. At the bottom of the hill, however, Bob began to joke and Ada played up, and when they reached the farm at which the car waited John wondered whether his imagination had not cheated him.

IV

JOHN PAYS A DEBT

DINNER was over and John occupied a corner in the hall. Mrs. Franklin had just left him, and although he had brought back the mountaineering party for dinner, some were on the terrace and some in the billiard-room. John liked to know people were about. In the Canadian wilds rude hospitality is the rule, and he had shared his salt-pork and doughy bannocks with tired strangers who stopped at his tent. Now an old English house was his, to keep the bush rule gave him some satisfaction.

The door was open, and he saw shadowy trees against the sky. A beam of light pierced a window high in the wall and touched the panelling, but outside its quivering reflections all was getting dim. Since the rain had stopped they had let the log fire get low. Alice and Ada crossed the floor, but did not see John, and when they went out he lighted his pipe. He was satisfied to be alone for a few minutes, because he wanted to recapture the scene on the scree.

He pictured the half-round hollow and the dark, forbidding gap that marked the top of the ghyll. He saw Violet Markham come down the treacherous slope; her strong, firmly-lined figure balanced in a fine unconscious pose. Her pluck was remarkable, but since she could not help, John wondered why she ran the

risk. It was, however, not important, and he would sooner dwell on Alice's baffled effort.

Alice was not like Violet. She was rather agile than strong. Her figure was light and marked by the suppleness of a willow branch; John saw her spring from block to block, until Bob seized her and they passed from his view. Alice had stated she was sometimes rash, and John knew her strangely generous, but he thrilled. Although, perhaps, excitement had carried her away, she was coming down for him!

Ada and Bob had gone round the corner, but Bob had, no doubt, heard John's plunge, and jumped back across the awkward gap when he saw Alice must be stopped. John had now fixed them all in the picture, but Franklin. He wondered what Philip had done and his pipe went out.

In the meantime, Elliot joined Violet on the terrace.

"John's accident rather puzzles me," he said. "The others' narratives are confusing and nobody seems to know what happened, although all agree about your pluck!"

Violet blushed and when she looked up with a quiet lingering smile Hugh pondered. He wondered whether Violet gave John smiles like that. John had a touch of austerity, but he was flesh and blood.

"I was really ridiculous," Violet replied. "All I knew was, I had pushed John down and must go after him. It ought to have been obvious I couldn't pull him up."

"You tried. But where was Philip? He was leader and knows the screes and ledges like an old rock fox."

"I expect he could not see," said Violet, and her

thoughtful voice indicated that she had speculated about his slowness. "Mr. Franklin had gone in front to look for a way round and expected us to wait. We ought to have waited, but it began to rain, and to get across the gap was not hard. I fell because I was careless."

Hugh studied her, and thought she tried to be just. He imagined Violet did not like Philip, but his part was to agree.

"If you did not wait for Philip, we must not blame him for the accident," he said.

Violet started for the drawing-room, but saw John in the hall and stopped.

"You look thoughtful!" she remarked.

"It's possible," said John. "I was trying to put together the scene on the scree, and although I couldn't look about much, think I've got the picture nearly right." He paused and resumed with a smile: "You take the foreground, sliding down the gravel. Then I've fixed some others; Bob holding Alice back and Wheeling busy at the rope. But I don't see Franklin."

"I imagine nobody saw Mr. Franklin. He had gone up the hill, and the broken ground cut his view. Until Wheeling shouted and we began to run about, he would not know you had fallen."

"Well, I reckon that was so," said John, and talked about something else.

In the meantime Alice and Ada stood at the end of the terrace, looking across the lawn. The sun had left the grass, but a white beech trunk glimmered and the high, pale-colored branches shone against belts of shadowy foliage. In the background the sky was yellow and the hills were melting blue. One smelt wet

grass and flowers and heard the river in the gloom.

"When all's quiet like this, Ruthwaite is a charming spot," Ada remarked.

Alice lifted her head. Her look was strange, and Ada imagined she brooded.

"I love Ruthwaite, and would be happy to know it prospered, although it is not mine. My step-father was prudent when he gave his house to John. Hugh and I are careless and extravagant. Our traditions are the traditions of the old school, but John is practical and modern. Then he's a Wreay, and the Wreays don't let things go down; they build up."

"I doubt if John is very modern. Sometimes one gets a hint of a primitive vein."

"In a way, Violet's primitive," Alice remarked. "When she gives a man a smile, you feel she's frankly flesh and blood. Perhaps it accounts for John's liking her."

"Do you imagine John does like Violet?" Ada inquired with a touch of amusement, for although Alice was fastidiously cultivated, she was very human.

"John ought to like Violet. Her father's helping his experiments at the mine, and when he fell she went down the scree."

"You went down."

"I did not. I started, but Bob stopped me."

"Bob's stopping you was justified."

Alice's eyes sparkled and her face got red. "He let Violet go! Violet does not belong to us, and John is not her trustee. When Bob held me fast I was savage and tried to hurt him. I don't know if I'm sorry. He ought not to meddle."

Ada knew Alice's temper, but she said: "When I

joined you, Bob was smiling. I saw nothing to indicate a dispute."

"Of course, you did not! If I had tried to push Bob down the scree, you would not have known," Alice rejoined. "He is not my relation; he's John's relation and supports him, but our rules are his——" She was quiet for a few moments, and then resumed impulsively: "After all, I *am* sorry. Bob took the proper line. I wonder where he is. Let's look for him."

They went along the terrace, but at the door Alice stopped. Although the hall was getting dark, she knew the two figures by the fire. Then a dull reflection touched Violet's face and Alice saw she looked at John and smiled. Her heart beat and the blood came to her skin.

"I expect Bob's in the drawing-room. We'll go by the greenhouse," she said.

Soon afterwards Bob and Wheeling came up the steps from the garden and went into the hall. Violet had gone, but John sat by the fire.

"If you're going to stay, I'll get a light," he said.

Bob told him not to bother and pulled out a cigarette. The fire was low, but sometimes a flickering blaze sprang from the red logs. By and by John turned to Wheeling.

"I owe you something and don't know if I've properly owned my debt. To see the rope come down was some relief."

"I'd have sent it down sooner, but I knew I must find a spot where I could brace my feet and Bob must get hold. Anyhow, I ran no risk, and the girls' pluck was fine. Miss Markham's sliding down was great!"

"Alice meant to go. In fact she'd started, but I pulled her back," said Bob, and smiled. "I rather think she was annoyed."

"I'm puzzled about Franklin," John remarked. "It looks as if you had thrown the rope before he joined you. However, I reckon he was up on top."

"Philip's generally cautious and perhaps he was rather slow," said Bob. "For all that, when he was wanted he was at the rope, and he pushed me on to ground where I could get good hold."

Wheeling looked up sharply, and John thought he studied Bob, but the glow of the fire had faded and the light was dim.

"Franklin was slow," Wheeling agreed. "All the same he knew his job."

John got up. "Well nobody was hurt, and it's done with. What about a game of pool?"

The others said they would stay and smoke, and when John left them Bob looked at Wheeling.

"You saw my line and played up!"

"I didn't see your line, but I've known you for some time, and reckon you're not a fool. All the same, Jake's my friend. Suppose he had gone over the gulch, what would the other gain?"

"Philip would gain nothing," Bob replied. "Anyhow, I expect Alice would get Ruthwaite and John's small share of his uncle's property. Philip does not inherit."

"But suppose he married Miss Elliot?"

Bob smiled. "It's possible Philip is willing, but I have grounds to imagine Alice is not. In fact; I think we can let that notion go——" He paused, and

giving Wheeling a keen glance resumed: "You were on the path behind us, and I expect your view commanded the rocks above. What did you see?"

"I'm beginning to use your English reserve," said Wheeling dryly. "You don't *talk*."

"Unless one's object's very good, one doesn't talk. We imagine Philip ought to have arrived sooner and it's possible he might; but he was high up at an awkward spot. Perhaps he wanted to look for a safe track; perhaps he hesitated and didn't want to go. My plan is to leave a man like that alone."

"In some ways, the plan's good," Wheeling agreed. "I reserve my judgment, but Franklin has got a yellow streak. If he forces me, I'll talk *loud*. Well, I guess that's all."

When John left the others he walked about the garden and weighed their remarks. Violet, Bob and Wheeling obviously thought Franklin was slow, and John admitted Philip had not, for his sake, much ground to use dangerous speed. It looked as if he had cautiously returned to the path and was not moved when Violet went down the scree. John had no use for a fellow like that, and Alice must not be his debtor. He resolved he would force Philip to take payment of the money he had lent. Finding him in the billiard-room, he touched his arm.

"Will you give me a minute or two?"

"Very well," said Franklin, with a resigned shrug, and they went to the tower. Philip sat down in the window-seat and waited. John got a light and picked up a fountain-pen.

"Alice owes you two hundred pounds. I'll give you a check."

"I rather think we agreed not to bother about the loan."

"We did not agree. You refused to take a check," John replied.

Franklin gave him a keen glance. "Have you some grounds to imagine I might now be willing?"

"I have no grounds; I didn't think about you at all. Alice ought not to have borrowed the sum, and since we are forced to get money for the mine I am trying to straighten out her accounts."

"Your new venture's no doubt expensive," Franklin remarked. "I expected you'd be willing to let a debt stand for which the creditor did not press."

John knitted his brows. He thought Philip's carelessness was forced and the fellow was disturbed. When John tried to give him a check before, his refusal was prompt and firm. Now his firmness was not marked. Yet Franklin was rich, and John had not thought him greedy.

"To let debts stand is not my rule," he said, and opened a check-book. "Anyhow, Alice's debt must not stand. I'm her trustee and will give you the sum."

"Very well. After all, it's not important," Franklin agreed, and John wrote the check.

Turning the form over, he pressed it on the blotting-pad and got up.

"That's all. If Alice talks about the thing, you can state the debt is paid."

Franklin smiled and took the check. "Thanks! If you imagine the reply you indicate would satisfy Alice, you don't know her yet," he said, and added with something of a sneer: "But don't you want a receipt?"

"You're a banker and know a check's a record," John replied, and when Franklin went downstairs lighted his pipe.

He had carried out his purpose, but it had not cost him the effort he had thought. In fact, Franklin's agreement was puzzling, but after a few minutes he let it go and rejoined the others.

V

IN THE LOOKING-GLASS

A DREARY wind blew up the dale, and the afternoon was dark. Rain beat against the windows of John's room, and Alice, kneeling by the old-fashioned grate, lighted the fire. Ada occupied a battered easy chair and looked about.

Crooked oak beams crossed the roof, for when Ruthwaite was built builders used materials the neighborhood supplied. The walls were not plastered, and above the narrow wainscoat one saw the uneven stones. Plans of the mine, books about engineering, and geological maps occupied the heavy table. The door lock was hand forged, and the big dark chest in a corner had long, rudely-engraved hinges.

All was old and somewhat bleak, and Ada thought the two easy chairs struck a jarring note. The engineering books, fountain-pens and drawing tools were modern but utilitarian.

"I like my chair, but since it's comfortable, one feels it's foreign," she said.

Alice smiled. "You would not have liked the others I took away. They had straight backs and wooden seats, and when John began to use the room we changed them for the shabbies of modern pattern we could find. John did not state if he approved; I rather think he doesn't know the chairs were changed."

"John is not fastidious, but if Ruthwaite was all

like the tower, it looks as if your ancestors were sternly frugal."

"John's ancestors built Ruthwaite. They were sheep farmers; mine were landlords. For all that, Hugh's house at Swinset is much like Ruthwaite, and was, no doubt, built for a fort. The border was long disturbed, and after we stopped fighting the Scots the small landlords fought their neighbors, gambled, and hunted the otter and rock-fox. Now we must pay for their extravagance, and I expect the frugal sheep farmers will soon see us go."

"So long as Mr. Wreay has control I hardly think your estate will go."

"John is a model trustee," Alice agreed with a touch of dryness. "All he wants is to look after the mine and farms, but he doesn't state his plans, and when I hint I'd like something done he frowns. This accounts for our invading his workroom when he's not about. After all, the mine belongs to me."

She went to the table and opened an engineering book and a ledger. Then she picked out some drawings of machines.

"If I stayed until the morning, I expect I would not find out much," she said impatiently.

"We must start for Scarfoot soon," Ada remarked.

"If you are keen to go, you can start. I'm not going."

"But does not Mrs. Markham expect you?"

"Mrs. Markham will be resigned; Violet arranged for us to go," Alice rejoined. "She likes Wheeling's society and perhaps she likes John's. Anyhow, they are willing to leave the mine for her. Well, Violet is attractive, and Wheeling declares her charming. One

doesn't know what John thinks; his habit's not to approve rashly, but he goes!"

"I expect John really goes to see Mr. Markham. Is not Markham's part important in starting the new company?"

"The important part was grandfather's," Alice replied. "In a way, I like the Markhams, but one feels that since John began to cultivate them he doesn't bother about us. Markham took grandfather's post and now Violet——"

She stopped, and Ada wondered with some amusement whether Alice was jealous.

"After all, Mr. Markham owned a large ironworks and knows much about business."

"It's possible," said Alice. "For all that, the chairman's post was grandfather's. He's proud, and although he says nothing, I know he's hurt. Markham's rich and perhaps has talents Hugh has not, but to make the mine pay is not all one ought to think about. I'm not parsimonious, and would sooner be poor than shabby."

Ada mused. Alice's color was high and her eyes sparkled. She was obviously moved and looked very proud. Ada liked her haughtiness. For Alice to be shabby was impossible, but she was not just.

"Your arguments do not carry much weight for Mr. Wreay," Ada remarked. "He is your trustee and his business it not to be generous and indulge you, but to look after your estate. I think you ought to allow for this."

Alice said nothing and began to pull about the drawings and documents. Her touch was nervous and

impatient, but presently her glance rested on the blotting-pad.

"Although John grumbles about my extravagance, he has not long since written somebody a check for a good sum—I see two o's," she said.

"Perhaps he was paying for machinery."

"When John pays for machinery he writes the checks at the mine office," Alice rejoined. "I wonder——"

She held up the pad and knitted her brows. "The noughts are plain, but the figure in front and the writing are not. Bring me a looking-glass."

"After all, the check was John's."

"I expect the money was mine. Perhaps that wasn't generous, but get me the hand-glass on my dressing-table. I want to know——"

Ada brought the glass and held it while Alice lifted the pad. The blotting-paper was old, and the reflections in the glass were blurred, but after Ada moved it two lines in John's bold hand stood out indistinctly: *Philip Franklin. Two hundred pounds.*

Alice started and put down the blotter. Her look was disturbed and her face was red. For a moment Ada was puzzled, and then she saw a light.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "Franklin gave you the sum you lent me?"

"I borrowed from Philip," said Alice. "Well?"

Ada went back to her chair. She was hurt and embarrassed.

"But you ought not. I thought the money yours. And for a time I can't repay you."

"You thought I got it from John?" said Alice

in an ominously quiet voice. "Well, John did not approve my helping you. He exaggerates his duties and doesn't know where to stop. When he thinks he ought to meddle he's generally ridiculous. Two hundred pounds is not a large sum, but it was useful to you. If you had not got it, you'd have been resigned to play at second-class music halls; now you have found your proper level and will soon make your mark. To know I pushed you on is something."

"You're kind, but I'm bothered," Ada declared.

"Then you are ridiculous, like John! At the beginning, he was not at all satisfied about my knowing you. Yet you're conventional and I'm not. You are jarred because I borrow from a man. When my friend needs help, do you think I'd hesitate about a thing like that? However, John has paid Philip, and you ought to be satisfied. When you are famous, you can pay me."

Ada was not satisfied, but for a few moments she was quiet. Then she asked:

"Are you going to marry Philip?"

"I am not," said Alice haughtily. "Had I meant to marry Philip, I would not have borrowed from him. Perhaps my reasoning's not very obvious——"

"At all events, the debt stands. John is now your creditor."

"John is my trustee and I imagine he'll marry Violet," Alice replied. "Besides, the check will go against my account."

"I doubt it," said Ada, in a thoughtful voice. "If John felt your lending me the sum was not justified, he would not use your money to repay the loan."

Alice frowned and pushed the plans angrily across

the table. "Well, I cannot inform John I studied his blotting-pad, and for a time I cannot pay him back. You're hurt, I'm humiliated, and John's responsible for all! He entangles things. However, if you are going to Markham's you had better start."

"I'm not going," said Ada. "I feel I have entangled things. I'd sooner stay and sew."

She got some sewing and pondered rather drearily. It was plain she had been the unconscious cause of trouble for people she liked. Alice was very generous and stanch, and although John had refused to indulge her, Ada saw he took the proper line. In fact, she thought him the man for Alice, and sometimes imagined Alice knew. Yet Alice was persuaded Violet attracted him. To meddle was perhaps rash, but Ada owed Alice much and resolved to try.

When John returned in the evening she joined him in the hall. She noted that his look was thoughtful and rather stern.

"You have not brought back Mr. Wheeling from Scarfoot," she said.

"That is so," John agreed with a twinkle. "I reckon Wheeling meant to stay."

Ada thought she saw a light, but she resumed: "I wonder whether you now admit I'm a proper friend for Alice."

John gave her a keen glance. "Why, I'm delighted to admit it, and would like to think you were my friend!" Then the corner of his mouth went up. "Anyhow, if I did not think Alice ought to know you, I'd try to be resigned. I reckon my views about it wouldn't weigh much."

"Very well! Friendship gives one some privileges. You go to Markham's rather often."

"I'm forced to go. I can't call Markham to Ruthwaite and I've got to see him."

Ada thought him dull, but she said: "Sometimes you see Miss Markham."

"Ah!" said John, and frowned, "I think I get you! To-day I enjoyed Miss Markham's society for about two minutes, and then went off to her father's smoking-room. But you see how I'm fixed? I can't cut out going to Scarfoot; Markham and I get up against fresh mining problems most every morning. I can't state I'm not attracted by Miss Markham and don't go to see her!"

"I might, perhaps, state something like that," said Ada, smiling. "But could you not now and then talk to Mr. Elliot about your problems?"

"Why, yes. Perhaps I was careless, but I'm bothered all the time about the mine. My rule's to get at the trouble, and let refinements go. Yet I ought to inform Hugh; I expect I've not used proper tact. Well, I'll try——"

"Your trying may count for much," Ada remarked.

After dinner John took Hugh to his room and smiled when he noted the fire.

"Somebody's kind," he remarked, and began to rearrange the books and papers on the table. "To know where things are is useful. These have been moved."

"Perhaps Alice was curious," said Elliot. "She's rather keen about your progress at the mine, but it's some time since you enlightened her."

"I have not enlightened you. Well, we got up

against a number of mechanical obstacles, and I didn't see much use in telling people we were baffled. Now we're going ahead I'm bothered, and feel you ought to know. For a time the lode carried pretty good metal, but it has recently got thin, and we pushed on an experimental bore. This morning I tested the rock we cut and found it remarkably mean."

"The ore is getting poor?"

"It looks like that. In fact, it looks as if the lode might peter out. All the same, it's possible we're boring through a cheap streak and shall strike pay-dirt again. We don't know yet."

Hugh came to the table and picked up a geological map, but after a few moments smiled and returned to his chair.

"I expect your maps puzzled Alice. What is a *syncline,* John?"

"When the rocks are folded and run in undulations the syncline's the bottom of the dip. Our tunnel's in the slant of a syncline, and sometimes slanted strata breaks——"

"Ah!" said Elliot. "If the strata were broken, the broken end would carry down the vein?"

"Something like that. A *fault* would certainly make trouble. But although the rock we're cutting is shaken, we haven't yet run into a fault."

Elliot pondered and then said quietly: "If the mine does not reward your efforts, you would be forced to drop your plans for mending Alice's fortune?"

"If we shut down the mine, we must sell the moorland sheep-walks, and use drastic economy in every way possible."

"To some extent, I'm accountable. I'm getting

old and slack, John. I trusted others and perhaps was cheated."

"This has not much to do with it," John replied. "So long as I see a fighting chance, the mine will not be shut."

"Water-tube John knew men, and when he chose you for trustee, his wisdom was obvious. The trouble is, we could not find you at the beginning."

"So far, nothing indicates that my uncle's choice was very good," John rejoined with a smile. "Anyway, you ought to know how we're fixed, and, if you take the statement of accounts by the map, I'll try to put you wise."

VI

JOHN LOSES THE VEIN

RANK fumes floated about the tunnel, and the rock at the end of the experimental heading was stained by the blasting shot. The miners had gone, but John crouched in the hole and awkwardly swung a hammer. His overalls were wet and his face was red from effort. A few candles burned in clay sockets, and the light touched the wet rock and the tram-rails that shone and vanished in the trampled mud.

Sturdee raked up small stones the shot had broken, Wheeling pulled about larger blocks, and Markham leaned against a prop. He wore a muddy mackintosh and his look was thoughtful. By and by a slab of wet rock flaked off from the wedge John struck, and throwing down the hammer he got a candle.

"You can see the *scratches*. We're up against it all right."

"Sure!" said Wheeling gloomily. "I reckoned on something like this."

Markham pulled him back and crawled into the hole. Where John had used the wedge the slab had broken away, as if it had rather rested against than formed part of the rock behind. On the whole the uncovered rock was smooth, but in places the surface was scored. Markham noted that the scratches were perpendicular.

"What's it mean?" he asked. "Have you lost the vein?"

John wiped his wet face, and going to a timbered recess picked up a few lumps of ore. Something about his quiet movements indicated that he used control and tried to brace himself. When he returned he took some pieces from the bottom of the smooth-fronted rock.

"I'll show you at the office, he replied. "In the meantime, look at these two lots of specimens."

Markham looked and began to see a light. The stones from the working face were heavy, carried small spar crystals, and were stained by metallic oxides. The others were of even color and texture, and did not weigh as much. Yet they came from the same level. Markham thought this ominous.

"You have reached a *fault,*" he said. "The ore has *gone down?*"

"It may have gone up," John replied, and signed to Sturdee. "Bring the specimens."

They set off along the inclined tunnel, and wet rock and the pools between the tram-lines reflected their blinking lights. Rows of timbers grew out of the shadows and melted as the candles moved on. One heard water splash, and the tramp of heavy boots rolled in broken echoes along the tunnel. The mine was old and had long been worked spasmodically when copper was dear. Now copper was cheap, but John had hoped by modern methods to keep the cost of refining low and get a small quantity of other metals the old miners had wasted. Recently he had begun to doubt.

After a time the gloom between the timbers melted,

and pale light crept along the tunnel from a gap in front. The party reached the gap, and John, stopping for a moment, looked about. The mouth of the adit pierced a broken crag, and above the crag long stony slopes went up and cut the sky. The sky was dark, and lead-colored mist rolled about the hills across the valley. In front, a noisy stream splashed among the stones in a marish hollow, and near its edge were old smoke-stained buildings and the ironwork for John's new furnaces. Not far off, the stream, broken into threads of foam, plunged down another crag, and the power-house occupied the level at the bottom of the fall.

The gloom of the dreary landscape reacted on John. The machinery and buildings had nearly exhausted the company's capital. All his money was invested, and he had given concentrated thought and effort. He had hoped for much, but now it looked as if the expensive plant might not be used. For all that, he meant to go on until he was forced to stop.

At the galvanized-iron office Elliot waited the party. When the others came in he took his cigar from his mouth and looked up.

"Well?"

"Our luck's bad," said Markham. "John will explain."

John signed to Sturdee, who shook out on the table bits of stone from a bag he carried, and went off. Wheeling began to sort the pieces, and John took from a shelf some other specimens, a geological map, and a plan of the rock-beds in the hill. Then he waited until Wheeling put together some of the specimens from the shot-hole and the shelf. When he

had weighed and examined the stones he gave them to Elliot.

"I reckon you can't distinguish between the specimens?"

Elliot and Markham said they could not, and John nodded. "One lot came from an outcrop *some distance up the hill;* the other from the heading, at a lower level. He put down some fresh pieces. "These carry ore; we ought to have got rock like this at the bore-hole, but you see we did not."

"The ore is obviously different from the other stuff, but I don't altogether see," said Elliot in a quiet voice.

John put the plan on the table. The overlying beds of rock were colored yellow, green and red.

"A rough longitudinal section of the folded strata; the dark line's our adit, and you will remark it follows the dip. Now suppose you cut the plan across and put one end against the other, but an inch lower down. The broken yellow band would meet the green; the green would meet the red. Well, the rocks have broken across and gone down, something like that. The lode is now below, not level with, the adit."

Elliot said nothing, but re-lighted his cigar, and John approved his pluck. Markham studied the plan and presently said: "You know the vein's gone down, because the stones from the hill match those dislodged by the blast; but when you talked about pushing down the end of the plan an inch, were you using a scale? Does the inch stand for a calculated distance?"

"It does not," John replied, rather grimly. "The plan is roughly accurate, but this is all. I don't know how far the lode has sunk."

"If it has gone far, to follow it would cost a large sum," said Elliot.

"That is so. Then pumping and hauling out the ore might cost us high."

Elliot said nothing and Markham turned to John.

"All depends on the depth. What do you *think?*"

"Wheeling's a mining engineer. Perhaps he can tell you something."

"To begin with, I can't calculate the depth. When you calculate, you want fixed data to reckon from. All the same, I feel the lode's not gone far. I expect it looks ridiculous, but a miner trusts his instincts, and if I were rich I'd bet high on our chances."

"You have not indicated your line. I imagine you don't want to persuade us," Markham said to John.

"The company must fix whether it goes on or not, and you are chairman. Anyhow, if you stop I'll push ahead alone until my creditors pull me up."

"If the company resolves to support you, we'll need fresh capital," said Markham, who glanced at Elliot.

Hugh smiled, a rather dreary smile. "I can do nothing. I invested a very small sum, but it was all I'd got."

"My wad's about two thousand dollars," Wheeling remarked. "It would buy some pitprops, and I'm willing to stake it on Mr. Wreay's luck. Since he's going on, I'm going with him, all the way!"

"Thanks!" said John, and for a few moments the others were quiet.

Then Markham asked Wheeling: "Do you mind stating your grounds for taking the risky plunge?"

"Why, certainly! Mr. Wreay was with me at Kamistaqua; I've seen him stay with an awkward

job. Then before we reached the fault the ore was pretty good. We're following the syncline, and I expect to strike stuff that will pay for smelting at the bottom of the dip. Well, I feel it in me the fault's not deep. We have got to use a steep down-grade, but before long we'll bore into the lode."

"Very well," said Markham, "I'd like, if possible, to get my money back, and I'd like to see Mr. Wreay out. All the same, to push on is something of a speculation, and I don't know yet if we ought to urge the shareholders. Perhaps Mr. Elliot ought to call a meeting, and in the meantime I'll get a good mining engineer to study the ground."

John half-consciously braced his shoulders, for he felt as if he had thrown off a load. He saw Markham was going to support him; as a rule, the old fellow promised less than he carried out. Elliot agreed to call the meeting, and soon afterwards went off. He went slowly and John, fronting the door, saw his thin figure against the mist. His shoulders were bent and he looked slack and tired. Presently Wheeling returned to the mine and Markham said: "I like your engineer."

"Wheeling's altogether a white man," John agreed. "But I'm sorry for Hugh. I think he got a nasty knock."

Markham nodded. "We know he's embarrassed for money. Elliot's reserved, but all his friends are not."

"How much do you know?"

"I know Dalton has a claim, and I don't trust the lawyer. He's cunning, and I imagine he has long used Elliot to help his ambitious plans."

"Is Dalton ambitious?"

"It looks like that," said Markham, with a smile. "Although he doesn't boast about his wealth, he's richer than people think. My notion is, he's ambitious for his son, and means to make the young fellow a country gentleman. He might do so: Frank Dalton's rather a good type, and perhaps his being much duller than his father is not a drawback. Then a good marriage would help."

John agreed without much interest and resumed: "But what about your mining engineer. I expect you mean to get a famous man whose views would carry weight?"

"I do not," said Markham, with some dryness "I know a sound man, and if he approves the venture, I will be satisfied. In the meantime, we need not bother about the shareholders."

John was puzzled. He did not see the other's plan, but one could trust Markham, and he shut the office and they started down the dale.

Elliot arrived at Ruthwaite some time before John, and found a number of young men and women on the lawn. Hugh was hospitable, but their careless talk and laughter jarred. He crossed the grass to the terrace, and Alice joined him at the steps.

"What did you find out at the mine?" she asked.

"The vein's gone down; John has reached a break in the strata," Hugh replied and stopped, for Violet came along the terrace.

"You went to the mine with father and I'm curious," she said. "Please go on."

"I cannot go far," Hugh replied gloomily. "To follow the vein would be an expensive undertaking,

and until we get expert advice I do not know if we ought to risk the money."

But John does not mean to let the mine go?" said Alice.

"John's resolved to bore for the vein, but he cannot do so unless the shareholders agree to meet the bill."

"They must agree. Somehow we will get the money," Alice declared.

"Of course," said Violet. "We cannot let the mine stop. Father will help."

Alice turned her head. She admitted that Violet's habit was not to boast, but her statement jarred. Although John might need help, it ought not to come from Markham, and Violet had nothing to do with John's efforts to develop the mine. Markham had meddled before; he had taken Hugh's post. In a sense he was a stranger, and he ought not to undertake duties that properly belonged to Alice's relations.

"To begin with, we must find out if the shareholders are willing to go on. But I think some of your friends are waiting at the tennis court," said Hugh, and went into the house.

Alice said nothing to Violet, and joined the group who waited for a game. She did not want to play, but somebody was needed and Violet had not gone with her. When the game was nearly over John crossed the grass, and Alice missed a stroke. John's look was stern, and she saw he was disturbed. She wanted to join him and sympathize, but could not leave the players. Then she saw Violet go along a path, as if to meet John, and she played recklessly. The others won, and Alice, throwing down her racket, left the court.

In the meantime John was under the old beech tree on the lawn, and Violet occupied a bench that went round the trunk.

"Perhaps I ought not to have stopped you, but I wanted you to know I'm sorry," she said.

"You're kind," John replied, and his look indicated that he was moved. "Well, I allow Wheeling and I got a knock, but a miner is used to set-backs, and we are not knocked out——"

He saw Alice and stopped, as if he meant to join her, but she gave him a careless nod and went to the terrace. John frowned and hesitated, but Violet began to talk.

Alice turned and went back to the tennis court by another path. She no longer wanted to comfort John. Violet had again forestalled her, and since John was satisfied with Violet's sympathy, she would not bother him with hers. At the tennis court she found a fresh partner, but her play was wild and they lost the game. When she was resting, John came up.

"I wanted to tell you about our set-back, but you did not wait," he said.

"Hugh told me some time since," Alice replied. "You did not use much speed."

John gave her a puzzled look. "When I arrived you were playing tennis. Although I knew Hugh would get home first, I thought you would want particulars he might not be able to supply."

"I was curious, but grandfather satisfied my curiosity. Markham will help you to bore for the vein."

"We don't know yet——" said John and stopped, for Alice's carelessness annoyed him.

"Oh! I expect Markham will see you out. Violet

indicated something like that. Well, your cultivating the people was prudent; they are useful friends. But I think the others are going. Will you come to the gate?"

John did not go. He was hurt and puzzled, and when Alice left him he moodily lighted his pipe.

VII

MARKHAM'S CONFIDENCE

A MEETING of the shareholders was called, and one evening after dinner Hugh took a small party to the Ruthwaite smoking-room. The room was rather cold, although the reflections of the yellow sunset touched the old-fashioned furniture and paneled walls. The narrow windows commanded a sweep of rugged moors, shining red and pink, and dark-blue broken hills, but for all the depth of color the landscape was bleak.

The shareholders were country gentlemen and neighbors of Hugh's, but not idlers; in the North the rule is not to loaf. One or two worked slate and limestone quarries; one or two were directors of small companies in the manufacturing towns on the coast. For all that, they were not typical business men. They had inherited the mineral properties, and speculation in industries outside the neighborhood had no charm for them.

Markham signed Hugh to the end of a table that carried a number of documents and plans. He was the company's chairman, but he knew Elliot and used some tact. Moreover, the others were Hugh's guests, and Markham sometimes indulged their prejudices. Although they had allowed him to join their circle, he had done so by their courtesy and not by right.

Markham was not an old standart, and had inherited nothing but shrewdness and stubborn industry.

Presently Hugh looked up. "If you like, you will smoke," he said. "We are friends and do not use much formality at our meetings. In fact, I occupy the chair by your proper chairman's politeness. Well, when you joined us at the mine I imagine your object was to develop a useful local industry. We are not greedy speculators, investing our money in undertakings we cannot control. When we floated the small private company our experiment promised well, but we are now fronted by an unexpected difficulty. Although you know something about this, Mr. Wheeling will give you particulars."

Wheeling got up, and after he had talked for a few minutes one remarked: "You imagine if you go on boring you will find the vein?"

"Yes," said Wheeling. "I reckon on that."

"But you will not venture to state the cost."

"No, sir. If the lode were mine, I'd bore right on until I did strike ore, but I allow it might cost you high."

"I understand Mr. Wheeling is willing to risk his pay," said Hugh.

"His pay is not important. If we go on, we risk all our investment and a fresh call for money," another remarked.

For a few moments the others said nothing and John thought them disturbed, but they were North country dalesmen, and when the dalesman bears a strain his reserve is marked. John himself was highly strung, for the suspense was keen.

Then Hugh signed that Wheeling might go, and

Markham said: "Mr. Bell does not exaggerate. All the same, I expect he sees that if we stop, our investments vanish. We own some half-finished roasting stacks and furnaces, and an ore vein we have lost at a fault. The property is not marketable."

"At all events, we know our loss," somebody rejoined.

"I doubt if this is much comfort," another observed. "When I invested I hoped to know my profit."

"Creighton's a hopeful fellow," said his neighbor. "My notion is, we were rash to speculate and ought to stop. The mine is old, but never paid unless copper was dear, and in view of the rapid development of American mines, it does not look as if high prices would return. Mr. Wreay, no doubt, imagined he could by using modern methods cut the refining costs, but he did not reckon on our losing the vein."

"That is so. Nothing on the surface indicated a fault," John agreed.

"A fault is an awkward obstacle," the other resumed. "One cannot calculate the depth the rock layers sink. Then, although I understand a fault is generally caused by the earth's crust's shrinking, in our neighborhood there were violent eruptions of volcanic rocks. If something like this accounts for the fault, it may imply that the vein is broken up and altogether lost."

Some of the others looked surprised and some amused. Markham knitted his brows, and John thought him interested.

"We did not know you were a geologist, Halliday. I rather thought you knew nothing about mining," one remarked.

"I now know something, Creighton," Halliday retorted. "However, I'm really quoting Franklin. Science is his hobby, and when I heard about our bad luck I went over to see him."

"I imagined something like that," Creighton commented. "Well, I don't know if Philip's geology is good, but I have thought him rather prejudiced against our speculation."

Markham turned to Halliday. "You understand Mr. Franklin's notion was, it would cost us a large sum to reach the copper?"

"He declared it would pay us better to shut the mine."

"Philip's a queer fellow," Creighton observed. "He was, of course, entitled to refuse to buy shares; but I hardly think he ought to run down the undertaking. Yet he has done so, although he's Hugh's relation——"

Markham gave John a meaning look, and he said: "When the company was floated, we did not bother Franklin to invest."

The others were quiet for a few moments, and John allowed them to weigh his statement. He thought Markham had wanted him to account for Philip's antagonism, but he did not altogether see where the old fellow led. Then somebody said: "You have not stated your views, Mr. Wreay."

"Have I not?" said John. "Well, if I thought we had reached a big fault, running right across the rocks, I'd stop, but the geological map does not indicate this. I reckon we're up against a small local disturbance of the layers, and so long as I can pay wages and get timber, I'm going to push ahead."

"But the mine is ours. Don't you rather take our agreement for granted?"

John smiled his crooked smile. "Perhaps I do take things for granted; sometimes one must go ahead and trust one's luck. Anyhow, Miss Elliot owns a large block of the shares, Hugh a number, and I own all that I could buy. We command a useful voting power, and perhaps it counts for something that we are willing to run a risk."

"You're a sportsman and I'd rather like to back you," Bell remarked, and John saw some others agreed. All the same, he wondered why Markham waited.

They began to argue and John thought a number were willing to take the plunge, but others hesitated. On the whole he thought them his friends, but he was, so to speak, conscious of something in the background that worked against him. It was significant that Franklin had talked to Halliday. In the meantime the light was going, and by and by Markham pulled out his watch.

"We don't make much progress. If you hesitate about risking your money, I will buy your shares."

The others' surprise was obvious. One or two looked at Markham hard, as if they thought he joked. Hugh lifted his head and his pose got tense. John wondered whether he was angry, but he said nothing. John himself was puzzled. He had imagined Markham had a plan, but had not expected a plan like this.

"What about the price. How many shares do you want?" somebody asked.

"I expect Elliot and his relations will keep theirs, but I'll take the rest at face value," said Markham

coolly. "If you're doubtful, you have now a chance to get out."

Hugh rested his arm on the table and his pose relaxed. For a moment or two he had thought Markham meant to get rid of him and seize control. Prejudices he had not altogether conquered had moved him to anger, but Markham's reply had banished them for good.

"Is your offer a stock-jobber's manœuver to stiffen the market? Or do you really want to buy?" Halliday inquired.

"My offer stands. Do you want to sell?"

"I did want to sell. Now I don't know——"

"Since I'm not daunted, you argue that you might hold on?"

"If you state your reasons for holding on, it would help," Bell remarked.

"Very well. I got a mining engineer to study the ground. The man's not famous, but he knows his job. He reckons our tunnel is not much above the bottom of the dip in the strata, and the fault does not go beyond the syncline. Then he imagines the ore carries better metal at the deepest point of the loop. However, I am not a geologist; I'm satisfied to know my friend thinks our chance is good."

"But that is all?" somebody asked.

"That is all," Markham agreed. "Nothing about mining is mathematically certain. My friend's report is encouraging, and Wheeling declares he feels the ore is there. Well, I trust the miner's instinct; in the steel foundry I trusted men who did not work by scientific rule. Science has not solved all our puzzles, and sometimes one must put one's stake on flesh and

blood. The man counts for more than the machine and rule——"

He paused and resumed with a smile: "Well, I'm willing to bet on John Wreay and Mr. Wheeling. If you are not, I'll buy your shares."

It looked as if his confidence had persuaded the others. They began to talk among themselves and by and by one said: "To bore to a deeper level means extra expense for pumping and bringing up the ore."

Markham nodded. "We need fresh capital, but in the meantime not a large sum."

"Then I suggest that Mr. Wreay and the manager fix the sum and we agree to a levy," said another.

Creighton supported him, but Hugh hesitated. Markham gave him a meaning look, and when Hugh formally stated the resolution all agreed.

"That's done with, but there's another thing," said Bell. "People know we have lost the vein and think we mean to stop. What about a paragraph in the newspapers?"

"On the whole, I'd be satisfied to indicate that we have not stopped yet and are going to undertake some experimental boring," Markham replied. If you like, I'll look up the *Journal's* correspondent."

The others approved and soon afterwards Hugh let them go. He, however, stopped John and Markham.

"I cannot meet a levy, and if the sum is large, to pay my granddaughter's share will be awkward."

"The sum will not be large," Markham said, and smiled. "Anyhow, I'm keen to go on and want your support. If you are willing to give it, I'll engage to see you out. Before long the mine will enable you to liquididate the debt."

Hugh hesitated, and then gave him his hand. "You're generous," he said with some emotion. "You have beaten me!"

He went off and Markham gave John a cigar. "It looks as if I had won over Elliot."

"Hugh has grounds to thank you, but I don't see your object," John remarked.

Markham mused and then looked up with a twinkle. "Perhaps I like meddling; perhaps the thing's a caprice. I've known poverty, and now that's done with, I like the sense of power. At the beginning Elliot was resolved to hold me off, and I got some amusement from our disputes. Then I began to see he was good stuff, and after we agreed about the sporting rights he was friendly. Hugh is not my sort; his sort is going and mine has arrived, but I think will not stay for long. New forces already threaten to squeeze us out. Well, I wanted Elliot for a friend and I've got him."

"Does this account for your interest in the mine?"

"Not altogether," Markham replied. "Loafing's harder than I thought, and I like a risk. When I started my jobbing foundry I had four hundred pounds. I borowed an extra two hundred and paid for my coke and iron after my customers paid for their castings. The venture was ridiculous, but somehow I made progress, and the manager of the little branch bank trusted me——"

He paused and shook the ash from his cigar. "Well," he resumed, "the business went. I started the steel foundry, and when I'd paid back all investors sold to the big combine. Now I'm a country gentleman, and sometimes find life dull. But perhaps you

see why I disputed with Elliot and speculated on the mine?"

"I think I see," said John. "Anyhow, I'm glad you did speculate, although I don't get your notion for giving a very cautious statement to the newspapers. Would you sooner people did not know we expect to strike the lode?"

"We are not going to the stock-exchange for money," Markham replied. "Then to imagine us beaten might encourage our antagonists and help us to see their hand."

"You reckon we have antagonists?"

"I imagine Franklin is not your friend," said Markham meaningly.

John knit his brows. He had long felt that Philip was against him, but he had not much to go upon.

"What about Hugh? His interest is mine and Philip is his relation."

"Elliot trusts Dalton," Markham answered thoughtfully. "Somehow I think the lawyer has long exploited Elliot and expects to profit by his entanglement. My notion is Franklin knew, and resolved to leave them alone. I don't altogether see Dalton's plan, but since it looks as if we might be forced to shut the mine, I expect we shall see soon."

He got up. The sunset had faded and the room was nearly dark.

"Come over to Scarfoot. The evening's fine," he said, and John went with him.

VIII

THE OLD SHAFT

SOME time after the shareholders' meeting Alice, walking across the hills one afternoon, stopped at the bottom of a steep and narrow dale. The rocks cut off the wind, the sun was warm, and Alice sat down in the heather.

A broken hill separated the spot from the dale occupied by the mine, and a bank of stones indicated a *moraine*, left long since by a glacier. The fern on the lower slopes was going yellow, on heathy belts the bilberry leaves were touched by red, and the pink ling was fading. In the river valley a mile or two off the oaks and alders made a band of dull green, but in the distance white stubble fields rolled down to the stormy coast. Alice reflected that when John returned the fresh oak leaves were copper-color, and the corn was springing. Now the oaks were dark and the corn was gone.

She remembered the satisfaction she had got from John's return. When he was in Canada, Ruthwaite was dreary; one felt as if a shadow brooded over the house. Hugh was reserved, but Alice knew he was disturbed. Dalton and the farmers bothered him, and Mrs. Franklin began to use small economies. Then John arrived and banished the gloom. His optimistic confidence and resolute activity were somehow like the winds that rolled away the mists.

Yet the brightness he brought was gone, and the gloom crept back. Alice felt that something threatened her relations and she was anxious for her grandfather. Hugh was kind and stood for much that she approved. This, however, was not all. She had thought John, for her sake, had gone to Canada; now it looked as if he had gone because his duty was to go. Then, since his return he had not bothered much about her. He was preoccupied, and the Markhams were his friends. Alice had some time since decided that she did not want John for a lover, but to acknowledge him Violet Markham's lover was another thing. Yet Markham had taken Hugh's proper post, and, in a sense, Violet had taken Alice's.

A dog's bark banished her moody thoughts. Her small terrier ran excitedly about the *moraine,* and then plunged into a thicket of scrub-oaks and fern. Alice called but the dog did not come back, and imagining it had got on a rock-fox's track, she went to the thicket. The oaks grew among big stones, and although but six or seven feet high were very old. Some of the stones were tilted, and when Alice pushed in between the branches the dog crawled out of a narrow hole. The little animal's hair was muddy, its ears were flat, and Alice thought it frightened.

Breaking a rotten branch, she pushed a stone into the hole and some moments afterwards heard a crash. Then she let go the branch, which slipped down and vanished. Alice returned to firm ground and began to ponder. Queen Elizabeth had brought German miners to a dale not very far off, and tradition stated that some had worked the Ruthwaite vein. Antiquaries disputed this, but it looked as if tradition was accu-

rate. At all events Alice imagined she had found an ancient shaft, and her finding it was important. The dale was lonely, and the sheep did not often feed there, and the scrub-oaks had perhaps long hidden the shaft. She resolved to go to the mine and see if John were about.

Since the hill was rough and very steep, Alice went down the dale and across a low spur. Coming down on the other side she saw Franklin in the road below, and signed him to stop.

"You came by the mine," she said. "Did you see John?"

"John is not at the mine," Franklin replied with some dryness. "I expect he's at Markham's."

Alice turned her head. She did not want Philip to remark her annoyance, for she was annoyed.

"Why do you think John is at Markham's?" she asked with an effort for carelessness.

"His habit's to go to Scarfoot," said Franklin, smiling. "Then when I came down by the crag, I saw two people in the dale. One was like Markham and his car was at the bottom of the hill."

"The crag's some distance off. How did you know the car?"

"When I'm on the hills I carry my glasses. Sometimes one sees a buzzard and sometimes a fox. Anyhow, Violet Markham was in the car."

The blood came to Alice's skin. Her anger was quick and imperious, and if Philip noted it she did not mind. He took out his glasses and looked down the dale.

"I expect they stopped at Dowson's farm, because I see moving dust across the fields. If you want John,

let's go to Scarfoot. The afternoon is fine, and Mrs. Markham will give us tea in the garden."

"I do not want John," Alice said haughtily.

"But I imagined you were going to the mine in order to see him."

Alice saw that Philip knew her no longer wanting to see John was significant. For all that, she gave him a proud look.

"You rather like to talk about John's friendship for the Markhams."

"I'm human and admit a touch of malicious amusement. For one thing, we were a tranquil family party until John arrived. He likes to hustle, and when he got to work our tranquility went. John's mood, so to speak, is dynamic. Ours is static; we'd sooner not be moved——"

"Your explanation's labored," Alice remarked impatiently.

"My explanation's not finished," Franklin rejoined. "For a time, John carried you and Hugh away. I rather felt you indulged him and neglected your proper friends. Still, John was not long satisfied, and when he began to cultivate the Markhams I own I was amused. They're his type, and although he goes fast they will probably keep up; I expect he has found out that you and Hugh would not. Perhaps the joke was shabby, but in a sense his deserting you was humorous."

Alice said nothing. She thought Philip's remarks were justified. Perhaps she had neglected her friends, and now John had neglected her. Yet she did not see the humor Philip saw.

"Since John has gone ahead and left us, perhaps

we ought to wish him luck and try to recapture the calm he disturbed," Franklin resumed.

"I think not," said Alice. "The difficulty is, John has not left us where we were. But I take the moor path, and there is no use in your coming. My aunt and grandfather are not at home."

Philip lifted his hat and went off, and Alice, crossing the moor, began to speculate about the old shaft. She ought to tell John and had meant to do so, but in the meantime resolved she would not. Perhaps the shaft was not important and the ancient miners had filled it up after working out the vein. Anyhow, since John was satisfied with the Markhams' help she would not offer hers. She knew she was shabby, but she was very bitter about the Markhams.

By and by she met Sturdee, coming from the village. He stated he had gone to engage some laborers and send a telegram. Water had broken into the mine, and they were clearing ground for a new pump. Sturdee reckoned to keep the water down would cost the company high. Then he went off, and Alice thoughtfully resumed her walk.

A week afterwards, Hugh and his neighbor, Halliday, one evening occupied the top of the terrace steps. Halliday's look was moody, and by and by he said with some embarrassment: "I'm sorry; but my rents are going down and I begin to feel the pinch. In fact, you see, I'm forced——"

"I think I see," Hugh agreed. "You will meet the claim on the shareholders, but after that you stop?"

Halliday nodded. "To let you down is mean, but at the meeting Markham rather took me off my feet.

If he now wants my shares, he can have the lot. I was at the mine this afternoon. They had not got the new pump, and the water was rising fast. The American was cool, but I thought him disturbed, and Wreay would not talk. He looked worn——"

"Do you know Bell's plans?" Hugh interrupted.

"Bell came over yesterday to inquire about mine. I rather think the water's breaking in has daunted him and one or two more. Well, I sympathize with you and Wreay, but I hope Markham was not bluffing us about the shares."

Hugh let him go and joined Mrs. Franklin on a bench near the steps.

"Our friends are frightened," he remarked. "The extra sum they agreed to find will soon be gone, and I expect they will refuse another levy."

"After all, Mr. Markham stated he would buy the shares," Mrs. Franklin replied.

Hugh smiled, rather drearily. "My shares are not numerous. If Markham takes the lot at their face value, it will not help much. Alice, of course, owns a larger number, because the vein was hers, but if Markham bought, the sum she'd get would not go very far. You see, the company was small; our object was to experiment, and if our luck were good, float a fresh company when we had a profitable undertaking to sell. In fact, the mine was my forlorn hope. Had John been able to smelt the ore economically, I imagined I might put all straight; mend my broken fortunes and remove the burdens on Alice's inheritance."

He mused, and Mrs. Franklin said nothing. Hugh had got a nasty knock, and knew she was sorry. To

talk would not cure his hurt. By and by she looked up, for the gardener carrying an envelope came up the steps.

"A note from Mr. Dalton, sir. The boy didn't wait," he said.

Hugh opened the envelope and clenched his fist, but after a moment or two he shrugged resignedly and gave the note to Mrs. Franklin. Dalton stated that he wanted to see Mr. Elliot at his office in the morning.

"It is rather like an order," Mrs. Franklin remarked in an angry voice. "If he wants to see you, why does he not come to Ruthwaite?"

"Dalton is now important and I am not; it is possible he meant to indicate something like that," said Hugh languidly. "Anyhow, one cannot argue with one's creditor. I suppose I must see the fellow."

"John is not beaten yet," Mrs. Franklin replied, but Hugh said nothing and went moodily to the house.

IX

THE RECKONING

WHEN Hugh went into the office Dalton got up with an apologetic air from his revolving chair. The lawyer's face was sunburned, his clothes were light-colored, and he looked like a sporting gentleman. Hugh knew Dalton was a good shot, and admitted that he was something of a gentleman.

"I asked you to come over, because I'm much occupied winding up a branch of my business," Dalton said. "One gets older and I begin to feel it's time to lighten my load."

"But is your son not ready to help you?" Hugh inquired politely.

"Frank's talents are not altogether mine. I had thought he might presently take my place and carry on the house, but now I doubt it," Dalton replied. "In fact, I begin to see another career for him——"

He stopped and studied the documents on his desk. Hugh waited and looked about. When he first transacted business with Dalton the lawyer's office was small and old-fashioned, and his rather shabby clerks jumped up with marked respect to show him in. Now the office was spacious and modern, and sometimes Hugh must wait. Dalton had three or four clerks, but they did not receive Hugh like an important customer. Then the lawyer struck a friendly note that rather jarred. At the beginning, for example, he

would not have talked about his son and his getting old.

"I had other grounds for not coming to Ruthwaite," he resumed. "Perhaps I'm sentimental, but the business we must discuss rather harmonizes with a lawyer's office than your house. Then I have the books and documents at hand."

"Ah!" said Hugh. "You want to talk about my debts?"

Dalton nodded. "We arranged to carry over the mortgage on the sheep-walk. The others on the farms and Swinset House run out at Martinmas. You have some time yet, but I hardly imagine you can pay off the bonds."

"You know I cannot," said Hugh, with forced quietness. "I had hoped you might persuade your customers to renew the loans. We may yet get good copper from the mine."

"The Ruthwaite mine has not paid for about a hundred years. Some old records are in your deed-box on my shelf. Hilary Elliot, who took a fortune from the vein and squandered the most part at Bath and the London clubs, was the last whose mining brought him a larger sum than he spent. After he died the vein was not much worked, until you sold the closed mine to John Wreay, the boiler-maker. Perhaps he would have made it pay, but he died. Well, the vein has recently gone down and water has broken in."

Hugh tried to brace up. The reckoning had come, but he had pluck.

"The price for agricultural land is low. To wait until the present slump is past might pay my creditors."

"I think not. Perhaps you were forced, but you have neglected the estate. The meadow bottoms are waterlogged, plough land is going sour, and the farmsteads need extensive repairs. In a short time a sale in the open market might not cover the debt. Then I personally lent you one or two sums without security."

"That is so," Hugh agreed, and his look was dignified. "Well, I will not argue, and I cannot meet the claims."

"For you to lose Swinset would hurt?"

"I do not see where you lead," Hugh said haughtily. "I was some time since forced to let the house to a sporting tenant."

Dalton pushed about some documents, and Hugh thought he hesitated, but after a few moments the lawyer resumed: "Perhaps we could arrange for Swinset to be left alone for your life. You have no children."

"I have a granddaughter," said Hugh, controlling his surprise. "Had I anything but debts to leave her, she would inherit."

"The arrangement I hinted at has something to do with Miss Elliot."

"I don't yet see," said Hugh, with ominous quietness.

"Very well. When two of your mortgages were due and the holder demanded payment I bought him out. Afterwards I bought the other debts. I am now your creditor, and Swinset is mine. Anyhow, I have power to sell it at Martinmas."

The blood came to Hugh's skin. Sitting very upright, he gave the lawyer a scornful glance.

"For long you have cheated me and plotted to get my estate!"

"Not at all. I bought for a just price mortgages the holder would not renew; you might have found this out had you bothered. I lent you money at current interest."

"In a sense, the money you lent was mine. Your father and you got rich by managing my property."

"To some extent, perhaps, that is so," Dalton agreed. "The relations between our houses are old; the Elliots were landlords, the Daltons their stewards. While your ancestors squandered, mine saved. But I have taken from you no money to which I was not entitled."

"We'll let it go," said Hugh, with languid calm, although calm cost him much. "One must pay for one's extravagance, and I cannot meet my debts. What are you going to do about it?"

"I am weighing one plan against another, and your agreement would tip the beam. Since I was a boy I have used effort and economy, and I want my reward. Perhaps you think it strange, but I liked sport; a run with the otter hounds, a day on the river when the stone-fly was out. All the same I conquered my liking for these things and stuck to the office. In consequence, I can buy Swinset and enjoy such sports as I have strength to undertake."

"The plan does not need my agreement," Hugh remarked dryly.

"The other does need your agreement. Moorcroft and the riverside pastures are mine. The house is small but modern, and the fishing is good."

"It is the best between the hills and the holms,"

said Hugh with surprise. "But Messenger was keen about the place; I had not thought he would sell."

"Messenger was obliged to sell. He signed the conveyance yesterday."

Hugh weighed the statement, for Messenger was his friend. The old standards were going; people of another type pushed them out. For example, Dalton was now important at Allerdale, and Hugh imagined his younger neighbors rather approved the fellow.

"But this has nothing to do with me——" Hugh began.

"I thought about giving Moorcroft to Frank on his marriage. Then, if you are willing to take an arbitrator's award about Swinset, we might avoid a public sale, and you could use the house and land for life at a nominal rent. Afterwards Frank would take the estate. The stipulation is, *he marries Miss Elliot.*"

Hugh moved abruptly. He was badly jarred, but saw he must use control.

"Your plan is altogether ridiculous," he remarked.

Dalton gave him a steady look and his mouth was firm. "I do not admit it. Frank was at a famous public school; he's honest; he has some talents and attractive qualities, and he uses your rules. Then I'm rich and can put him where he wants to go. Miss Elliot's estate is embarrassed and yours is bankrupt."

"For all that, the thing is ridiculous," Hugh declared. "I did not imagine——"

"You did not imagine my son thought about marrying your granddaughter! Well, Frank knew your prejudices, and to some extent this explains my waiting. But do you know if Miss Elliot disapproves my son?"

"I do not," said Hugh languidly. "Had not you, yourself enlightened me, I would have refused to believe your son's ambition could carry him so far. However, if Alice Elliot marries before she is twenty-five she cannot use her inheritance, unless I consent."

Dalton smiled rather dryly. "Miss Elliot's inheritance is not valuable; moreover, she would not be forced to wait very long, but we'll let it go. I dare say you have got a knock, and since I cannot claim Swinset until Martinmas, I will be satisfied if you weigh the plan. I expect you will see it has some advantages."

Hugh said nothing, but got up and went off. He had had a knock. Dalton, however, could not turn him out yet, and he resolved to wait before he talked to Alice.

Two or three days afterwards John, returning from the mine one evening, went slowly up the terrace steps. Recently he had not gone back for dinner. Putting up the new pump and engine kept him strenuously occupied, and the miners worked on night shift in order to push on the tunnel. John's face was rather pinched and his eyes were dull. He looked tired, and Alice, waiting by the bench, was moved to pity.

"Sit down, Jake. I want to talk to you," she said.

John sat down and waited. Alice's moodiness had recently puzzled him, but he noted that she called him Jake.

"You are tired," she resumed. "I think you work too hard."

"Until we strike the lode I have got to work," John replied, rather grimly.

"So far, nothing indicates you have reached the proposed level?"

"I allow we have not got much encouragement. All the same, we're going on."

"The rock layers form a kind of loop; Wheeling told me something about this," said Alice thoughtfully. "He expects to get the best ore at the bottom. Do you think the old miners tried to bore straight down to the loop farther on?"

"It's possible, but we haven't found their workings."

"Two or three weeks since, I found an old shaft at Stony Ghyll," said Alice quietly. "The top is filled up and small trees have grown about the stones. I don't think people would know it was a shaft, but tradition states there was a mine in the neighborhood."

John looked up with a start. "Stony Ghyll? The map and Wheeling's calculations indicate——" He paused and resumed: "But why did you not put me wise before?"

"I ought to have done so, but I was shabby," said Alice with a blush. "Sometimes I'm very shabby. Perhaps had you not looked so stern and tired I would not have told you yet."

John's eyes twinkled and the corner of his mouth went up. "You're not at all shabby, but I think I get you! I was being punished, but you thought me tired and resolved to let me off? Well, that's something, although I don't know my offense. Anyhow, in the meantime, it's not important."

"Is your offending me not important, Jake?"

"Oh well!" said John, with some dryness, "my habit rather is to give you jolts, although it's not a habit I

want to cultivate. In fact, I think my object is better than my luck."

Alice smiled and gave him an approving glance. Sometimes John played up, and although she thought his effort was hard, he had banished her moodiness.

"Your object generally is good, but your touch is not light."

"It's possible; perhaps I break things. But about the shaft?"

"You are very keen about the shaft," said Alice, who would sooner have talked about herself and him. "Concentration, of course, is useful, but when you concentrate——"

"Some concentration's indicated," John interrupted. "The mine is yours; I've risked your money and must make good. Where exactly is the shaft? Do you think it deep? What's it like?"

Alice told him. Sometimes John was dull, but he was very stanch, and he meant to find the lode because the mine was hers; he did not state he meant to find it because he was her trustee. Yet he went to Scarfoot and Violet had charm. When she had satisfied his curiosity, he knitted his brows.

"I reckon you have helped us much, but we'll see what Wheeling thinks. He'll be along in a few minutes."

"Is Mr. Wheeling coming to dinner?"

"I told him he must; we have got to talk and are occupied all the time at the mine. Wheeling kicked; he was going to Markham's."

"Then you did not want to go?" Alice said carelessly.

"Certainly not," said John. "I go when Markham wants me, but to stop and talk to Mrs. Markham and Violet is rather a bore. Although they're charming people, I'd sooner be at the mine."

His sincerity was obvious, and Alice thrilled, for she thought she saw a light. She reflected that Philip was to some extent accountable for her imagining Violet attracted John. Besides, at the beginning Philip had hinted something like that about Ada.

"You imply that to talk to Mrs. Markham and Violet does not bore Mr. Wheeling?"

John smiled. "Perhaps I ought not to have done so. Anyhow, Wheeling's a white man and I expect he's going to make his mark. However, he's coming——"

Wheeling ran up the steps. Alice had remarked that he sometimes did run when she saw no particular grounds for speed. John signed him to the bench, and pulled out some cigarettes.

"Sit down and take a smoke. For a minute or two Alice and I are going to talk. Well——"

When he stopped, Alice narrated her finding the shaft. Wheeling's eyes sparkled.

"I guess Miss Elliot's got it!" he exclaimed. "The ghyll is an old glacier's track and cuts down to near the syncline. The miners who sunk the shaft knew their job; but if they struck pay-dirt, why did they quit?"

"Queen Elizabeth, who brought the first miners to the neighborhood, quarrelled with the Hansa league. Besides, it's possible the men were killed by the Scots."

"Then they were killed soon. James the First united the kingdoms," said John.

"The Scots and Cumbrians fought long after the

union," Alice rejoined. "But we don't know the miners were Elizabeth's Germans. You will go and see the shaft?"

"Sure!" said Wheeling. "We're going *now*."

"But you will not get dinner."

Wheeling laughed. "We must cut out dinner. At the office I've some cold pie my landlady put up. Get on a move, Jake; dark is coming. Good night, Miss Elliot."

X

JOHN RECOVERS THE VEIN

ALTHOUGH the beech leaves overhead were copper brown and pale-gold tufts dotted the thin birch branches across the hedge, the afternoon was warm. The sun touched the bench in a nook cut out of thick yews, and Alice was tranquilly occupied by some sewing. By and by a servant came along the path and she put down her work.

"Mr. Frank Dalton wants to see you," the servant announced.

Alice was surprised. She had met Frank at the houses of one or two friends and had won a tennis match with him. On the whole she liked the young man, but he did not come to Ruthwaite, and his wanting to see her was strange. She told the servant to bring him to the spot, and when he arrived indicated a garden chair.

Dalton did not sit down. He was an athletic young fellow, and his easy pose was good. He took off his soft hat and did not put it back. Alice wondered whether he had forgotten, but his rather obvious embarrassment puzzled her.

"I felt I must see you as soon as possible, Miss Elliot," he said. "In a way, of course, I'd sooner have left the thing alone. It's awkward, but I didn't want you to imagine——"

He stopped and Alice's curiosity was excited, but

she waited, and with an effort he resumed: "Until this morning I didn't know my father's scheme, and when I did know I was savage. Still, you see, he is my father and meant to help. All the same, he ought not to have meddled."

"One's relations do meddle and sometimes they're rash," Alice remarked. "Well, you do not approve Mr. Dalton's meddling with your affairs?"

Frank looked at her hard. It was strange, but she was calm.

"Certainly not," he declared. "Perhaps if he had left me alone—— But he does not know where to stop, and I expect he's put in my way an obstacle I can't remove. He ought to have reckoned on your pride. However, I want to persuade you I had nothing to do with it. You mustn't think me willing to take advantage of Mr. Elliot's embarrassments."

"Ah!" said Alice sharply, "I begin to see a light! Mr. Dalton is my grandfather's creditor? Well, I suspected something like that. Now he means to claim his debt?"

"Mr. Elliot is in my father's power; he can sell Swinset at Martinmas," Frank agreed, with some hesitation.

Alice's color was high and her eyes sparkled, but she gave the young man a steady glance. "For all that, Mr. Dalton might relent? He makes a stipulation?"

"I thought you *knew*. Until this morning, I did not," said Frank, and awkwardly satisfied her curiosity.

For a few moments Alice said nothing. She was horribly angry, but she saw Hugh's not telling her was

significant; had she been willing to marry the lawyer's son, he would not agree. Frank was not accountable, but she wanted to hurt him. When she could trust her calm, she looked up.

"You took a very proper line and I like your honesty. You thought I ought to know at once you did not approve the marriage Mr. Dalton planned for you!"

"You're not just," said Frank. "I think you're not kind. Then, since Mr. Elliot had not enlightened you, I doubt if I did take the proper line. To talk now, as I'd like to talk, is of course ridiculous. My father has ruined all, but before he meddled I hoped I might persuade you to marry me. Anyhow, I meant to try, and if I hesitated it was because I know my drawbacks, though they're perhaps not altogether the drawbacks Mr. Elliot would see. Well, it's done with. I expect you hate me and my father. The strange thing is, he thought his scheme would work."

Alice was moved. For all his embarrassment Frank was somehow dignified, and the note he struck rang true.

"Perhaps Mr. Dalton put my loyalty to my grandfather too high, but I do not hate you, Frank," she replied. "You undertook an awkward task because you felt you ought, and although you're modest, you have advantages. You're sincere and scrupulous and you think for others. I was not just. However, had Mr. Dalton not meddled, I would not have married you. That's all, Frank. I'm sorry——"

Frank bowed, as if he were resigned, hesitated a moment, and then went off. When he had gone, Alice went to the house and looked for Hugh.

"Frank Dalton came over to see me," she said.

"Ah!" said Hugh, and noted her rather strained look. "Well?"

Alice smiled. "I don't know if you are anxious, but I won't keep you in suspense. Frank was annoyed about his father's plot, and politely intimated that he did not mean to use it. In fact, he would not urge me to marry him."

"The fellow's an insolent pup!" Hugh exclaimed, and his face got red.

"Oh no!" said Alice. "Frank is rather nice, and although the ground was awkward he used some tact; for one thing, he declared that until Dalton meddled, he had hoped he might persuade me to agree. He, however, admitted it was now done with, and went. I don't know if he was resigned or not."

Hugh's relief was keen, but he smiled. "Frankness has advantages, but, for all that, the frankness young people use—— Well, perhaps I'm old-fashioned."

"I'm modern and am often selfish. Had I been romantically generous I might have married Frank, in order to put things straight for you. Still, I saw all your not telling me about Dalton's scheme meant. If you are old-fashioned, you're very kind."

"I would not have allowed you to marry Dalton; the fellow is not your sort. But since you like frankness, have you not thought that Philip——"

"Philip is less my sort than Dalton," Alice replied with a touch of haughtiness. "Then he has not shown that he wants me."

"Philip is cautious and in some respects fastidiously sensitive. I rather think he has waited and studied you because he durst not risk a refusal, but if he

believes the proper time is come he'll urge his claim."

"You are clever, but I'm not very dull. Philip will have no grounds to think the proper time is come. But I wanted to account for my not helping you by marrying Frank. Well, somehow I'm satisfied John will find the vein, and the mine will make us rich enough to pay Dalton's debt."

"John is fronted by numerous difficulties," Hugh said soberly. "We need expensive machines and our money is getting short."

Alice's eyes sparkled. "One does not bother about machines. A real man conquers difficulties, and John is fine and stubborn flesh and blood. I heard Wheeling say his blood was *red*."

She went off and Hugh mused. Markham had said something like that, and Markham had used machines and men. It looked as if Alice did not like Philip, and Hugh admitted that he himself had doubted the fellow since John arrived. He wondered whom Alice did like, and then let it go and brooded over his debt to Dalton. John, with typical energy, had begun to clear the old shaft and Wheeling was optimistic, but Hugh durst not hope for much.

A week afterwards, a party from Ruthwaite went one afternoon up the rough path to Stony Ghyll. Ada and Bob had arrived the day before, and Franklin had come for lunch. Alice had suggested the excursion because John had stated he might reach the bottom of the shaft before dark. A plume of smoke floated across the hillside and a stream of muddy water ran by the path. Thick planks and small fir trunks lay about, an ugly derrick spanned the shaft, and the measured clang of a pump throbbed about the ghyll.

When the party stopped by the derrick, John let go a windlass handle and went to meet them. He wore heavy boots and muddy overalls; his hands were rough and his nails broken. Wheeling, guiding a plank down the shaft, was muddier and his preoccupied look indicated that he did not mean to stop. When Wheeling got to work he had not much use for careless talk, but when the plank vanished he saw Violet Markham and smiled. Alice noted his smile, and was conscious of some satisfaction. Although John had seen Violet, Alice rather thought him annoyed.

"We did not expect you. I thought, if our luck was good, we might bring you over in the morning," he said to Hugh.

"The afternoon is fine and the young people wanted to see how you got on," Hugh replied. "Still, if you think we'll bother you——"

"Oh well, I mustn't send you back, and in a few minutes I'm going down. We have nearly cleared the shaft of water, and I reckon to reach the tunnel. Perhaps you could get as far as the top platform."

"When John is strenuously occupied he's not polite," Alice remarked, and laughed. "We will go to the platform, Jake. I'm certainly not going back."

John hooked a small lamp to his hat, threw a coil of rope into the shaft, and took the party to a ladder. They went down a short distance and stopped at a rude platform. John threw his light on the cracked and dripping rock and a few massive beams jambed across.

"The timbering's temporary; the old stuff has rotted, and Wheeling doesn't trust these slabs," he

said. "If we strike pay-dirt at the bottom, we'll make a proper job."

"We are going to strike pay dirt," Wheeling remarked.

Alice looked about. Overhead, the inclined derrick legs cut a patch of sky; below, candles touched the rough, wet rock with unsteady light. A ladder went down to another row of beams, crossed by two planks, and a man on one drove a wedge behind a timber. Wheeling called the man, and John seized the coiled rope.

"I want somebody at the rope, but the rest must stop," he said, and turned to Alice with a smile. "Elizabeth's miners did not drive the shaft, but I expect I'll be the first to reach the bottom for perhaps a hundred years."

Wheeling, Franklin and Bob went down after him, but the planks were narrow, and Bob stopped on the ladder. The light touched their figures, and sometimes their faces were distinct. When Franklin threw the rope across a beam, Wheeling seized the end.

"I'll make it fast."

"Very well," said Franklin, who stepped back.

Wheeling fastened the rope, and turned to John.

"If the water's deep, signal, and we'll hitch on to the derrick wire and hoist you up. I'd sooner you let us lower you by the winch."

"The boys want the winch to haul the truck up the bank. To go down the rope won't bother me," said John, and stepped off the beam.

Alice, holding on by the ladder, leaned out from the platform, and the others went as near the edge as they

dared. John had vanished, but his nailed boots rattled against the rock and they saw the light on his hat. For a few moments it was cut off by Wheeling's bent figure, and then the faint twinkle pierced the dark again. Alice's heart beat. For an athletic man, John's exploit was not risky, and had he thought it worth while, the miners would have let him down by the derrick. All the same, to go where nobody had gone for a hundred years was something of an adventure, and Alice admitted she would rather he was coming up.

She did not hear his boots now, and the light had got very small. The faint beam had no reflections and looked strangely alone in the dark, until it presently went out. Alice thought John had entered the tunnel, and pictured his crawling over fallen blocks and rotten timbers. All was quiet, but for the soft splash of water and the throb of the pump, and Alice braced herself against the strain. She had felt a strain like that before, when John lay in the treacherous gravel at the edge of the ghyll. Then she had gone to help; now she must wait.

After a time she saw the lamp. Below the beams the dark was level. One did not get a sense of depth; it was rather like looking at a flat black curtain, pierced by a small hole. Then John shouted and Wheeling signed Bob.

"He's bringing a load of specimens. I want you."

Alice knew they did not mean to pull John up. When he had fastened on the rope they would bear part of his weight, and he would use his feet on the old timbers and rough stones. She had gone up awkward ghylls like that and thought Wheeling and Philip

could give John all the help he needed. Yet Wheeling wanted Bob.

"Leave the rope alone. This job's mine," he said to Franklin.

"My dear man, I've steadied climbers up the most part of the gullies in Cumberland and some in the Alps," Franklin replied with haughty carelessness.

"You're not going to steady Wreay," Wheeling rejoined.

His voice was hoarse, and Alice glanced at Hugh. Although he did not look interested, she thought he had noted Wheeling's firmness. Her curiosity was excited, and getting a firm hold on the ladder, she looked down. The light touched Wheeling's face, which was very stern. Bob had reached the plank, but Franklin did not move. Alice thought he knew Wheeling's voice had reached the group on the platform, and he meant to stop.

"If you'd sooner haul, I'll coil up the slack," he said.

"Let go the rope. Get off the plank!"

"If you're sober, you're altogether ridiculous."

"I'm mine boss and take no chances. Get up the ladder!" Wheeling replied, and signed Bob.

Franklin went. When he reached the platform he said nothing, but his look was strained. In the meantime John's lamp got brighter, and by and by he pushed a bag on to the plank and pulled himself up. Alice forgot Franklin, and her heart beat with satisfaction. A few minutes afterwards, John came up the ladder, and gave her two or three lumps of stone.

"I reckon you have put us on the track," he said.

"The tunnel's in the lode, and so far as I can see the ore carries good metal. Feel these specimens."

"They're pretty," Alice remarked, noting the glistening streaks of spar. "It's splendid to think you have found the vein! And, in a way, I'm proud——"

"They're *heavy*," John said, with a smile. "I reckon our luck is good, but when I get the stuff analyzed we'll know more."

Alice gave the stones to Hugh, who waited when the others went up, and stopped Wheeling at the top of the ladder.

"I expect you see your ordering Mr. Franklin from the rope carries a rather unfortunate implication?"

"Yes," said Wheeling, "I see it now. Jake had got a load and the climb was awkward. Perhaps you had better let it go at that."

Hugh gave him a keen glance and shook his head. "Franklin cannot let it go; you were not alone. Unless you apologize to him and authorize me to tell our friends that you were highly strung, you must justify your action."

"My partner was on the rope——" Wheeling began in a stern voice, and turned to Philip, who joined them. "Mr. Elliot thinks I ought to state why I put you off the plank. Well, I'm willing, but I want John to judge. Are you willing?"

Philip hesitated, and then forced a smile. "Of course! I expect John and Mr. Elliot will see the thing is not at all important."

"We'll fix this evening," said Hugh. "Now let's start. I expect the others are curious, and they must not wait for us."

XI

WHEELING STATES HIS CASE

THE light was going but the logs in the grate threw trembling reflections about the hall, and John in a corner of the big hollow fireplace smoked his pipe and pondered. He had roughly tested the specimens he had brought from the old shaft, and imagined the ore carried good metal, but he was not thinking about the mine. By and by Ada Hall came down the stairs, and he got up.

"Since you arrived I've been forced to hustle and have hardly had time to talk to you," he said. "Now I want to state I'm glad you have got a good engagement. Won't you tell me about it?"

Ada sat down in the corner. "Thank you, John! Perhaps I am lucky. Elaine Durham heard me play and invited me to join her. Miss Durham, of course, is famous, the 'cellist is a first-class musician, and the others are known in the manufacturing towns. Her agent has made very satisfactory arrangements for our tour, and we begin at Sheffield in a week or two."

"An engagement with famous people implies your getting another when you want. Well, you have real talent and are going to make good. Looks as if I were something of a fool, because when Alice wanted to give you a proper start I wouldn't let her. You now know I wouldn't let her?"

"Yes," said Ada, "but I know you paid Franklin's

debt. You are Alice's trustee and saw you ought to refuse."

"I thought I ought," John remarked with a crooked smile. "The trouble is, my judgment's not very good. I thought I ought to go back to Canada, when I need not; but I want to talk about another thing. Alice has recently looked disturbed, and I forced Mrs. Franklin to admit that Frank Dalton wanted to marry Alice, but Hugh did not approve. That's all I got; Mrs. Franklin would not talk. Well, I don't like Dalton's father, but Frank, himself, is a pretty good type, and if I thought Alice—— You're her friend; I reckon you know something about it?"

Ada studied him. His smile had gone and his look was inscrutable. She noted his strange calm, and resolved to make an experiment.

"Then you imagine Alice wants to marry Dalton?"

"I want to know," said John. "Alice is certainly disturbed."

"Well, suppose she were willing to marry Frank, but Mr. Elliot objected? Do you think you could persuade him?"

"It's possible. I might try, but, to begin with, I've got to be sure——"

Ada was moved. John was very generous. Although he had mended Alice's fortune, it did not look as if he meant to claim the reward for which Ada thought he had labored. Yet she was conscious of some amusement. John was not clever.

"You must not be rash," she said. "I think you are rash and sometimes are carried away. Perhaps your pushing me into the cab one night was typical."

"I *put* you in the cab. Perhaps I was firm, but I was not rough."

"Oh well," said Ada with a smile, "the important thing is, I didn't want to go. Then you admitted you went to Canada, when you need not."

John looked at her hard, and she put her hand on his arm. "Wait and weigh your plan properly. To meddle about Frank Dalton would be very rash——"

She stopped, for Franklin crossed the floor. He went by as if he did not see her, and she gave John a meaning smile and vanished.

Franklin went up the stairs and met Alice on the landing. A lamp burned on the newel-post, and Alice noted his moody look. Hers was calm and proud.

"Hugh is waiting. I think you were foolish to dispute with Wheeling, but since the others heard his order, perhaps you were forced," she said.

"I don't altogether understand your remark."

"Wheeling had grounds for not letting you hold the rope," Alice rejoined. "He knows you, and I know you now. Why did you not tell me John had paid my debt?"

Franklin said nothing, and Alice went downstairs and crossed the hall to John. "Hugh expects you in the tower."

"Very well," said John, with some surprise. "But what does he want?"

"Go and see," Alice replied, and John went.

When he entered the tower-room, Hugh occupied a chair at the table and Wheeling the window-seat. Franklin leaned against the mantelpiece. They were quiet, but John got a hint of strain. Hugh indicated a chair.

"When you were coming up the shaft, John, Mr. Wheeling would not allow Philip to handle the rope. He was firm, and since the others who were with me on the platform noted his firmness, I asked for an explanation. Mr. Wheeling replied, very properly, that when he gave the explanation he would sooner Philip and you were about."

"Ah!" said John, rather sharply. "I'll wait."

Wheeling got up. "To begin with, I allow it's possible my caution was not needed. All the same, John was coming up the rope and I meant to take no chances——"

"You stated something like this before. The implication is obvious," Hugh remarked.

"That is so," agreed Wheeling. "I see I've got to justify my not letting Franklin hold the rope. Very well. I must go back some little time. John went to Canada, stopped at the mine for the winter, and opened my safe, in order to study copper refining. I reckon he might have found out all that was useful in England. Franklin knew, but let him go."

"Since Mr. Wheeling does not know how much I know about copper, his surmises ought not to weigh," Franklin remarked.

Wheeling turned to Hugh. "I reckon I must agree; but Mr. Franklin knows something. When I got busy at the mine, the gentlemen who bought your stock came along and talked. At first they were hopeful, but by and by I saw they began to doubt. Their arguments were pretty sound, and it was plain somebody who knew how copper was refined had got after them."

"The shareholders had grounds to doubt," said Franklin, with a polite sneer. "I expect that was all, and you indulged your romantic imagination."

"Wheeling is not romantic; he's practical," John remarked. "All the same, I do not see Philip's object for scaring our friends."

"I think I see," said Hugh, with some dryness. "So far, however, Mr. Wheeling has done no more than state his suppositions."

"I undertook to justify my not trusting Franklin, and I reckon I'm going to do so," Wheeling replied. "Some time since, Franklin and I were with the party on the sheep-path by the ghyll. John fell and brought up in the stones a yard or two from the edge. When I saw a rash move would send him over I went for the rope. Miss Elliot and Miss Markham started down the scree. Franklin was leader and knows the rocks. I'm going to show you the line he took——"

He stopped and the others said nothing. John's look was very stern and Hugh's inscrutable. Philip's face was white, and he fixed his glance on Wheeling, who looked resolute and cool.

"My argument is, Franklin from the beginning was John's antagonist," Wheeling resumed. "When we hauled John back to the path I ought to have warned him; but I talked to Bob, and Bob thought not. Bob's a typical Englishman, and I allowed he knew your rules. Now I'm going to send for him."

He went out, and a few moments afterwards Bob came in. Hugh ordered him to tell all he knew, and his statement was short.

"When John fell I had got to a corner that com-

manded a ledge above. I rather think Philip had not remarked this. He was on the ledge and stopped there, looking down."

"Do you imply he was unwilling to risk the awkward scree?" Hugh inquired.

"I don't know, sir. Until the girls started, he waited."

"It looks as if you waited at the corner!" Franklin interrupted.

"Alice and Wheeling can account for my slowness. Can you account for yours?" Bob rejoined.

"Do you imagine Philip could have got down?" Hugh resumed.

"He did so, afterwards. Miss Markham and Alice went down."

"Thank you, Bob. Do you dispute his story, Philip?"

"Not at present. I'll wait until Wheeling has stated his case."

Wheeling went with Bob to the passage and brought in Ada Hall.

"You were on the sheep-path when John fell," he said. "Will you tell Mr. Elliot where Mr. Franklin was?"

Ada hesitated. "I would sooner not talk about the accident; in fact, until the dispute at the mine, I meant to say nothing. Perhaps you ought not to urge me. I am not a mountaineer."

"We do not ask you to judge whether all that was possible to rescue John was done," said Hugh. "But I expect you can tell us what the different members of your party did."

"After all, perhaps I ought to tell you," Ada

replied with embarrassment. "I had gone round a big block, and when I heard the gravel run down I tried to get back, but was afraid. I was close against the block, and don't think Mr. Franklin saw me. He was on a shelf some way above and did not move. Mr. Wheeling got the rope, Bob jumped across the gap and seized Alice, and Miss Markham plunged down the scree. I heard a noise, and when I looked up Mr. Franklin was jumping across the rocks——"

"He *jumped?*"

"I think he jumped. At all events, he came down very fast, as if it was not hard."

"Thank you!" said Hugh. "Open the door for Miss Hall, John."

Ada went out, with obvious relief, and Wheeling turned to Hugh.

"I've stated my case, sir. My business was to show you Franklin was John's antagonist, and I used proper caution when I put him off the plank. Well, if you allow Franklin didn't mean to help John at the scree, I claim I've made good."

"I went to help," said Philip quietly.

"The girls went first," Wheeling rejoined. "When they went, you dared not wait. Perhaps you thought Miss Elliot would get away from Bob."

Hugh stopped him. "I rather think you have tried to prove too much. All the same, I admit it looks as if Philip might have gone to John's help. That he did not go is obvious." He turned to Franklin. "Miss Hall's narrative supports Bob's. If you wish to satisfy us, you must prove them inaccurate."

"There is no use in my trying to do so," Franklin replied with forced calm. "Wheeling is John's

supporter, and is very plausible. The others are his friends and are prejudiced. Well, suppose I admit I was startled, and at first hesitated to go down the scree?"

"The fellow's a famous climber. He claims he was scared!" Wheeling commented.

"You have finished your argument," Hugh said sternly, and gave Franklin a searching glance. "We will take it that you were afraid. Very well. A man who sees another in danger and shrinks from a risk two girls are willing to run must not expect my friendship. The rules of my school and yours demand stanchness to one's companions and physical pluck. If you come to Ruthwaite, you will not be received, I imagine John agrees."

"That is so," said John in a stern voice. "If Philip comes to Ruthwaite when I'm about, he'll be very rash. Well, I think that's all, and we can let him go."

Franklin went and Wheeling remarked apologetically: "John's my friend, sir. I was forced to butt in."

"I imagine you are a useful friend," said Hugh with a smile. "Well, you took the proper line and ought to be satisfied, but you did not altogether surprise me. If it's much comfort, I confess I expected something like the story you told us."

XII

ALICE'S GIFT

A LIGHT breeze shook the branches and dead leaves drifted across the lawn, but in the shelter of the house the sun was warm and the bright beams touched the red creeper on the wall. John went to the terrace steps, and Alice, carrying a bundle of letters, came up the drive. When she got near she laughed.

"I really believe I'm keener than you, Jake."

John gave her a quick glance and his mouth got firm. In the strong light her hair shone with red reflections; the cool wind had brought the blood to her skin and emphasized the delicate pink and white. Her dress was soft, vague blue that changed to green in a yellow beam. In the background, dew sparkled on the grass and a beech was draped by thin streamers of gold and brown.

Her beauty moved John, but he sensed in it something austere that harmonized with the keen, dark North. Although she was fresh like the dew the night's frost had left, her charm was not altogether physical. One got a hint of fine fastidiousness, stanchness and pride. John had long loved her, but he doubted. Alice was young and romantic; he was sober and dull. Besides, he thought he knew another obstacle.

Alice began to sort the letters and put a long envelope by itself.

"For grandfather, from Dalton. I expect it's about the mortgage," she said, and frowned. Then she gave another large envelope to John. "This is yours, and I see *Assayor and Analyst* on the stamp. The report we waited for has come. Aren't you excited?"

"I'm half afraid," said John. "Much depends on the analyst's report. If the specimens carry the ore I think——"

He stopped, and glanced across the lawn to the distant plain that rolled to the sea. Alice noted that he wore his strange veiled look, and wondered whether it was significant that he had turned to the West.

"If the ore is good, all our troubles ought to vanish," she said.

"I think yours will vanish; I don't know about mine. Anyhow, when the copper pays for smelting my job is done."

"You hint that you are sorry? I know you rather like an awkward job."

"I like to put things straight," John replied rather drearily. "Well, if the mine does pay, I'll perhaps have carried out Water-tube John's plan. We can pay off our debts, give you your proper inheritance, and help Hugh."

"I wonder——" said Alice, studying him. "You think that's all your uncle planned? However, you have got the analyst's report. Don't you want to know——"

He began to tear the envelope, but she stopped him. "Wait a moment, Jake. I wish you luck; at the mine and at all you undertake! Now you may pull

out the letter. Somehow I know the news is good."

John took out some papers and his eyes sparkled. "The ore will pay for refining; I guess we have struck it rich, and in three or four weeks our heading ought to cut the old tunnel where the good stuff is."

"Splendid, Jake!" said Alice, and looked up. "Wheeling is coming. I expect he was anxious to find out—— But he has brought Violet."

The others came to the steps and Wheeling said, "I was keen to know if you had got the assayor's statement. Coming along, I met Violet and she reckoned Mr. Markham would like to know."

Alice looked at him rather hard. Scarfoot was some distance off, and at Ruthwaite breakfast was not yet served. Violet's habit was not to go out early. John, however, gave Wheeling the report.

"We have made it, partner! The ore is high-grade."

Wheeling glanced at the paper and the blood came to his skin. His eyes shone, and his pose was strangely alert.

"We have surely made it! Mining's a gamble, but if you bet high and hold on, you sometimes win. Well, this forces things—I want to state that Violet has engaged to marry me as soon as her father agrees."

John gave Wheeling his hand, and Alice kissed Violet.

"You must come in for breakfast. Aunt and Hugh will be interested," she said, after a minute or two.

Violet and Wheeling went to the house, but Alice stopped John.

"You do put things straight, Jake, and you don't think for yourself. Now you have found the vein,

mended our fortunes, and helped your friend to a good marriage, you ought to be satisfied, although you have not carried out your plans about Frank Dalton."

John was surprised and embarrassed. It looked as if Ada had enlightened Alice, but he could not see her object.

"I imagined you liked Frank," he said.

"I don't like to feel you want to get rid of me," Alice replied with a smile. "You're generous, but to know you were willing to give me away rather hurt. I'd sooner you were a little selfish."

"Don't you like Frank?" John asked.

Alice shrugged. "We were talking about your good qualities, but you have some others. Wheeling declared you went for things like a wild musk-ox. Well, we won't bother Frank Dalton yet. I must give Hugh his letter, and breakfast is waiting."

"Then let's go in," said John in a resigned voice. "Perhaps it's not important, but I rather think Wheeling stated I was like a *moose*."

After breakfast Hugh took John to the tower.

"Dalton has sent me proper notice that unless his claim is met at Martinmas he will sell my mortgaged property," he said. "When Alice refused Frank, I of course expected his father to be firm."

"Then, Alice did refuse Frank?" John said sharply. "Perhaps it's strange, but somehow I thought you refused."

"I did not approve, but this was all. Had Alice meant to marry Frank, your consent was needful. Would you have agreed?"

John was conscious of poignant satisfaction, but he

used some control and answered in a thoughtful voice: "Perhaps I would not have agreed altogether willingly. Still Frank is an attractive and honest young fellow, and if I'd imagined Alice——"

He stopped, for he saw Hugh studied him, and his smile was embarrassing.

"To let Alice marry Dalton would have cost me much," said Hugh. "Perhaps one thing would have helped me to be resigned; Philip would have got a jolt. Philip was your antagonist, but I have begun to see he was mine. You know my carelessness about business. After I had squandered my inheritance in rash speculations I neglected Alice's. In fact, had you not arrived, I think her estate would soon have melted. But Philip is a business man and was my adviser; he saw where I was going and let me go."

"Since the fellow was a banker, it looks like that," said John. "All the same, I don't see what he thought to gain."

"For long I did not. Philip wanted Alice, but he's older than she. I imagine she rather shrank from him and he knew. Well, he's obstinate and cunning. He saw Dalton tried to entangle me, and did not meddle. When I was deeply embarrassed, and the most part of Alice's estate was Dalton's, Philip would come to help. He'd claim his reward from Alice and expect me to consent. Philip knows her rash generosity."

"The treacherous swine!" John exclaimed.

"Philip's plan was clever," Hugh resumed. "He did not know Dalton's, but I imagine Dalton knew Philip's and allowed him to help. Philip thought the lawyer would be satisfied with my property. Well,

since neither will get Alice, perhaps the thing is humorous. But Dalton claims his debt at Martinmas. What am I to do?"

"Wait," said John. "We have found the lode and the ore is good."

"My shares are not numerous. If the company earned a large profit, it would not save me from bankruptcy."

John got up. "Anyhow, wait until the mortgage runs out. The mine is going to pay, and we won't let you down. Before I go back to Canada I want to straighten the tangle."

He went off, and Hugh pondered. His debts were large, and for all John's encouragement he did not see how he could meet the reckoning, but by and by he began to weigh another thing. John talked about going back to Canada. In some respects, John's dullness was remarkable.

For a few weeks John was strenuously occupied. He and Markham pushed on the furnaces and Wheeling pushed on the heading to cut the old tunnel. It rained much and savage winds roared in the crags, but John, in dripping oilskins, fronted the storms and urged the builders laboring at the bleak dale-head. He slept at the mine, but as a rule his sleep was short, for the throbbing blast-lamps flared by power-house and growing furnace through the bitter nights.

At length, when Martinmas was near, John lighted a furnace and started the dynamos. The refining plant was not finished, but his progress justified an experiment, and one day he sent off a slab and a very small bar of metal. All was done quietly. John's

rule was to make good before he celebrated his exploit, and he did not invite the shareholders to watch the trial, but when he got the assayor's statement he was satisfied. John took the statement to Scarfoot one evening two days before Martinmas, and he and Markham talked and weighed things long.

When he got back to Ruthwaite Alice met him in the hall. He looked rather worn and thin, but Alice thought his manner was strangely confident. He pulled out and gave her a little piece of dull metal.

"It does not look like copper," she said. "What is it, Jake?"

"It's, so to speak, the first-fruits of a bonanza crop. The analyst allows it's fine silver."

Alice's eyes sparkled, and the look she gave John was proud. "Oh! Jake, you have labored nobly, and now you have won! I've bantered you because you were obstinate, but obstinacy like yours is very fine. When all was dark you were confident; when shabby people doubted you, you smiled and went ahead. Nothing daunted you; you went for the obstacles like—like a musk-ox."

"A *moose*," said John. "Anyhow, I didn't always smile; sometimes I swore."

"I won't play up," said Alice. "I don't want to joke. You ought to see—but, of course, you're not a sentimentalist. Well, let's be practical! Is there much silver?"

"We expect to get a small quantity; the copper's high-grade. Our plant's cheap and small, but when we start to work with proper tools the mine will make you rich."

"Some time must go before I am rich and I want money for grandfather now. Martinmas is but two days off."

"That is so," John agreed. "Well, I have a notion; I'll tell you about it when I've put it over. Where is Hugh?"

"He's in the tower," Alice replied. "When he's disturbed he goes there, perhaps because the room was Water-tube John's. Now it's yours, but somehow one feels as if your uncle were not altogether gone. People trusted John Wreay, his word went, and when he took control difficulties vanished. I think it's not for nothing you are his nephew."

John went upstairs. He saw Alice was moved, and he must not let her emotion carry him away. His job was not finished yet. Hugh was sitting by the fire in the tower room. His face was pinched and his pose was languid. When John came in he tried to brace himself, but the effort was obvious.

"Has Dalton sent you a fresh message?" John inquired.

"He has not. I must go over to see the fellow in the morning."

"No," said John. "Call him here, as your habit was. Fix the time and state you want particulars of his claims."

"But his claims must be met."

"I reckon we're going to meet them. The analysis has come along. It's better than I thought. We have made good. However, we'll talk about this again, and I won't enlighten you about Dalton yet. You have got to trust me. I'm used up and, now I can sleep, I'm going to bed."

Hugh's look indicated keen relief. "Very well," he said. "To trust you is not hard."

On the morning of Martinmas day Dalton arrived, and was received by Hugh and John in the tower. Hugh was formally polite, John was stern, and their coolness puzzled the lawyer. It did not look as if they wanted to conciliate him; in fact, he felt that Hugh was rather his employer than his debtor. When Hugh indicated a chair, he sat down and put some documents on the table.

"The top slip is an abstract statement of the loans," he said. "Proper particulars are given in the agreement forms."

John picked up the documents and pulled out his pocket-book. For some minutes he said nothing, and Hugh and Dalton studied him with strained curiosity. Then he looked up.

"If you will cancel the deeds and write a receipt in full, I will give you a check."

"*You* will give me a check?" Dalton said dully, for he had got a nasty knock.

"Certainly," said John. "I owe Mr. Elliot much. Well, what about the receipt?"

Dalton pulled out his fountain pen; John went to the table and wrote a check. Then he studied the paper Dalton gave him and pushed across the check.

"I expect your receipt covers the ground, but I'll send the documents to Heron, and if formal releases and transfers are required, he will see you. Well, I think that's all."

Dalton said nothing. There was nothing to be said. He was paid, but his scheme had failed and John's remark about Heron was significant. Since Heron

was a lawyer, it implied that Dalton would transact no more business at Allerdale. He pulled himself together, bowed to Hugh, and went out.

When the lawyer's steps died away in the passage, Hugh straightened his bent shoulders as if he threw off a load. He looked younger, and his slack pose got firm.

"The fellow's gone; I guess he will not come back to bother you," John remarked.

"You have a talent for helping others," said Hugh with emotion. "But the sum you paid was large, and you are not rich."

"It looks as if my credit was pretty good," John replied with a twinkle. "I borrowed the money, but we'll talk about this again and find a plan for you to pay me off. In the meantime, I expect you'd sooner owe a debt to me than Dalton."

Hugh gave him a very friendly look. "Money cannot pay my debt. You have saved Alice's inheritance, you have broken Dalton's power, and given me back hope and confidence. The strange thing is, I have no claim. I am not your relation."

"If I must account for my meddling, you certainly have a claim. I am, of course, a Wreay, and when I arrived Bob put me wise about the jealousy between our houses. Then I belong to the new school, and reckoned on your distrust and antagonism. My point of view is not yours; my touch is not light. I expect I broke your rules and give you nasty jolts. For all that, you supported me; you played up and did not sneer. You helped me carry out an awkward job, and now, if you're my friend, I'm well rewarded."

"While I live I am your friend," said Hugh in a quiet voice. "Very long since I was unjust to your uncle, but his revenge was noble, and when he died he sent you to finish his work."

John left him, and, going downstairs, found Alice in the hall. She signed him to the oak bench by the big fireplace, and he leaned against the carved post.

"I saw Dalton go, and knew he was beaten," she said. "It looks as if you had sent him off."

"It does look something like that," John agreed.

Alice gave him a strange glance, and his heart beat, but she resumed: "Since I am rich, to pay Dalton was my part."

"You could not pay; you are going to be rich, but that's another thing. Then for a year or two your fortune is in Hugh's control and mine. We dare not use your money to pay his debts."

"Perhaps that is so," said Alice. "But where did you get the large sum?"

John frowned. "I borrowed, but we'll let it go. You mustn't bother about business."

"Not to bother about business was the Elliots' habit, and it has cost us much," Alice rejoined. "I am going to talk about business until my curiosity is satisfied. From whom did you borrow?"

"From Markham. All the same, he's not Hugh's creditor."

Alice looked up rather quickly, and John wondered whether she was annoyed. Her glance was calm and searching.

"He's your creditor. But why did he lend? You must be frank, Jake; I mean to know."

"Oh! well. Markham thought my shares would soon be valuable. The security was pretty good, although I reckon he wanted to indulge me."

"Then you pawned your shares, all you have really, in order to help my grandfather?"

"I didn't see another plan. Anyhow, Hugh will pay me back."

Alice got up and her eyes sparkled. The blood came to her skin, but she did not look embarrassed. John thought her look was proud.

"For my sake, you risked your shares in the mine you saved! You're as rash as you're obstinate, Jake, but your rashness is splendid. Well, now you have nothing, all that's mine is yours."

"I think not; I'm your trustee," John remarked, and the corner of his mouth went up. "Until you reach the age my uncle fixed, you can't use your money."

"When you smile like that you're very nice, but sometimes you're dull," said Alice, and the red on her skin got deeper. "Water-tube John stated that if I married and my trustees approved—— Well, I imagine Hugh does approve and——"

John looked at her hard and thrilled, but he dared not yet believe. Alice smiled, but her smile was very gentle.

"Oh, Jake, you're strangely modest! You declared I am extravagant, but I pay my debts. You gave me all you've got; splendid effort, splendid staunchness, and pluck that never flinched. After that, I've nothing much to give, but if you want me——"

John advanced and took her, and in his firm grasp she knew she was his for good.

Some time afterwards Hugh came down the stairs,

and Alice, giving John her hand, went to meet him. Hugh studied them and smiled.

"After all, Water-tube John's plan has worked," he said. "I expect you admit his will was not as ridiculous as you sometimes thought."

"I was ridiculous," Alice replied with a blush. "John Wreay was the kindest and cleverest man I knew until I knew the other John."

THE END